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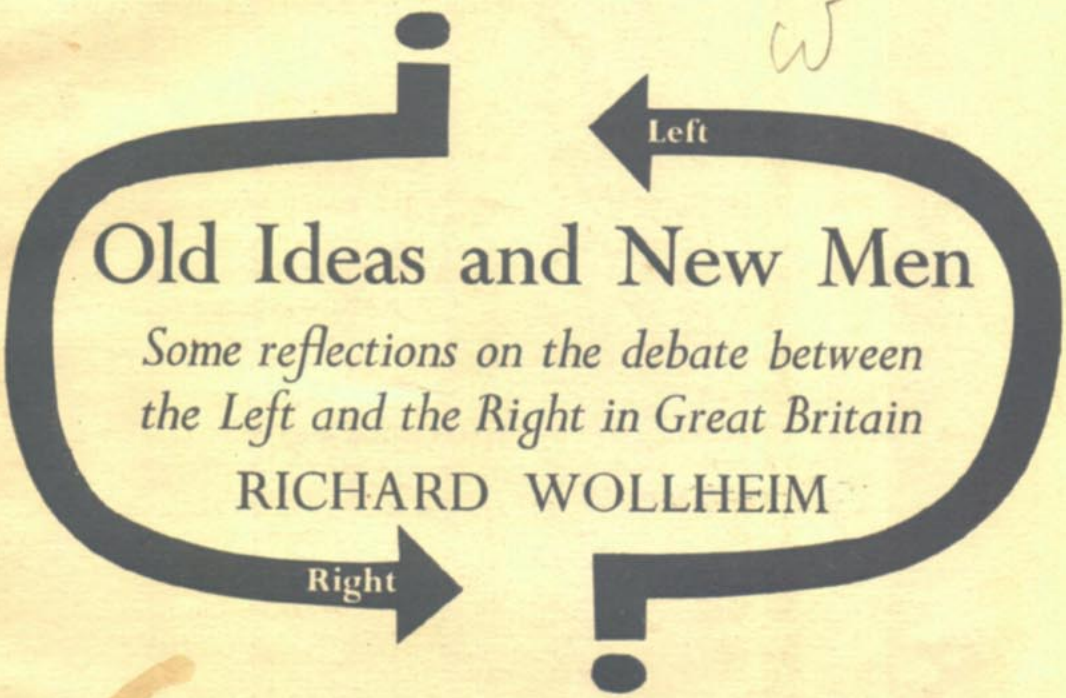

Old Ideas and New Men

Some reflections on the debate between the Left and the Right in Great Britain

RICHARD WOLLHEIM

Two long stories by

Edmund Wilson • V. S. Pritchett

OCTOBER 1956 37 MONTHLY 2s. 6d.

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Richard Wollheim

Old Ideas and New Men

Some Reflections on the Debate between the Left and the Right in Great Britain

Tes socialistes, disait Bouvard, demandent toujours la tyrannie.
—Mais non!
—Si fait!
—Tu es absurde!
—Toi tu me révoltes!

IT IS a common assumption nowadays that there has in the past few years been a considerable shift of political allegiance amongst the intellectuals of this country from the Left to the Right. The question I want to ask is, What gives rise to, what sustains, this myth?

For it is, I am convinced, a myth. Taken literally—and there are of course other and more fashionable ways of taking sociological generalisations, but I am not here concerned with them—taken literally, it is without foundation in fact. I am quite certain that if, for instance, we had in our possession figures showing the way in which writers of distinction, dons, scientific workers, painters, museum officials, and educated civil servants had voted in the General Elections of 1945, 1950, and 1955, we should not find any appreciable variation over this period in the way in which the votes were distributed between the two large parties. And this sort of evidence, statistical evidence, is surely the sort that would be decisive. Of course such evidence is in fact not available. The figures do not exist. In their absence we must rely on personal experience. Mine certainly gives no confirmation to the popular view: when I look up from the pages of the *Spectator*, what I see around me bears no resemblance to what I read of there.

There are, I am ready to concede, two facts about English life, one important, one less important, that can somewhat confuse the issue in one's mind. The first is that there has in recent years been only too obviously a considerable movement of intellectuals away from politics as such: that is to say, from politics of either persuasion. Moreover, as the intellectuals of whom this is true have by and large been intellectuals of the thirties, the movement has in practice amounted to a defection from the Left: but—and this is all important—without any corresponding gain of strength to the Right, unless to be unpolitical is in itself to be on the Right. Much of the detail of this movement is obscure. Its causes are various—the feeling that intervention by intellectuals in politics is no longer necessary, the feeling that more socialism will mean too much power for bureaucracy, boredom, age. And its strength is difficult to assess. But its existence is indubitable, and

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may to later historians seem one of the most significant features of the present time. The other fact that might confuse one over all this is a marked tendency to use the term "intellectual" with excessive liberality. It has become what it never was before in this country, an occupational term. Since the war there has been instituted a kind of intellectual careerism which is quite new to England; every literary party given in London where decent drink is to be had, attests to its existence. There are by now a large number of jobs—editorial, journalistic, administrative—of a lucrative character, which sustain this new phenomenon. In the past these jobs would have been held by intellectuals, and they bring those who hold them into constant touch with intellectuals. But it is wrong to infer from this that those who hold them now are intellectuals. Not all who drive fat oxen are fat.

These two facts go some way to explain the thesis that I am concerned with: but they do not substantiate or even qualify it. It remains untrue that a large number of British intellectuals have moved from the Left to the Right. Why then does this belief gain such widespread credence? In large part the answer is connected with a more pervasive feature of modern life: and that is the excessive, one might say the obsessive, attention and respect paid in intellectual matters to the written word. A man may have truly remarkable gifts as a talker, as a teacher, as an expositor, as an orator; he may be able to move assemblies, to electrify the young, or to convince the incorruptible; but, if he hasn't actually "written," then all these gifts and powers, however prodigally granted, are regarded as somehow not quite real or substantial. Their attribution to him is at best provisional. And when at last, perhaps in desperation, he does put pen to paper, and produces a book, or an article, the slightest error or inaccuracy, the faintest suggestion of dullness is enough, quite in itself, to dissipate, to annihilate the reputation he had previously enjoyed. And when this happens, it will be felt that justice has been done, a bubble pricked, a charlatan exposed. For it isn't just that failure in the one direction is thought, as a matter of some kind of intellectual economy, to be more important than, to outweigh, success in the other: but the former is taken as conclusive proof of the non-existence of the latter. It is as though the spoken word or the deed bore no real relation to one's character, and so one could not claim any credit for doing well with either: whereas the written word is not just indicative of, but is, oneself. And as with individuals, so with political movements. Whenever there is any discussion of the condition, of the "form," of a political movement, everyone straightway looks to the literature of that movement to settle the issue: to the pamphlets turned out by the party officials, to the books produced by its more academic supporters, and above all to that "serious" journalism in which it is supposed to find its authentic voice. If there is any one single way in which people judge the intellectual vitality of the Left, it is, I suppose, by reference to the columns of the *New Statesman*: and perhaps the time is not far off when the Right will similarly be assessed in terms of the *Spectator*.

Now, given this particular method of assessment, it is, I think, less surprising that people arrive at the verdict that they do. For the literature of the Left does undoubtedly make a rather lowering impression: whereas that produced, at least initially, by the literature of the Right is one of energy and purposiveness. And this is by no means a matter of superior intellect and ability: for few would be prepared to deny that the balance in these matters still comes down in favour of the Left. Why is it?

Let us take first the problem of the Left. In part, the difficulty is clear. In 1945 Great Britain for the first time in its history came under truly effective Socialist rule. It may seem paradoxical that the progress of Socialism should have been so delayed in the country that could, after all, make a good claim to be the place of its birth. But whatever the reason, the Labour Party benefited from it. On taking office it possessed a political programme that in its completeness and rigour was more like a political programme

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than any that any other British government, or any British government in recent times, could boast of. That is to say, it had a programme inscribed at the top of which were certain very general principles and whose main body consisted of a number of practical proposals which were the various applications of these principles to the facts of British life—some being obvious applications, while some were more questionable, embodying, that is to say, further unspecified assumptions. The extreme rigour and systematic character of this programme were not of course the work solely of Transport House: they were the products of sixty or seventy years of Socialist thought applied in a comparatively virgin field. The fruits of this were the *anni mirabiles* of the Labour government, years in which not merely were certain features of social life radically changed but current conceptions of the extent to which society could be changed were quite revolutionised.

Now this programme, like all programmes of active or constructive political movements, fell very roughly into two halves: it consisted, that is to say, in part of measures that were held to be right in themselves, and in part of measures that were held to be right on account of their consequences. And by measures that are right in themselves, I mean either measures that are right whatever their consequences might be, or measures whose consequences are so calculable that demonstration of them does not have to figure in the advocacy of the measures themselves. Now, both humanity and common sense demanded that it was these measures that should receive priority in the legislative programme. And so in the years 1945 to 1950, the Labour Party gradually worked its way through what might be called the more "obvious" half of its programme: the institution of the Health Service, the nationalisation of coal mines, the creation of full employment, the liberation of India. By the time its first term of office was over, it had all but come out on the other side, and seemed about to push forward into the more "controversial" half.

Since then the electorate has decided, twice indeed, that it should not have the opportunity to do so. But it is very arguable that this has been because it hasn't shown itself ready to take the opportunity were it given it. This unreadiness is fundamentally an unreadiness on the thinking side. It would seem that the Left has not fully appreciated the great difference in *order* between the problems that confronted it immediately after the war and the problems that have been confronting it since, say, 1950. The issues are at once more technical and more complicated. Decisions of strategy no longer immediately determine decisions of tactics. The interpretation, the application of the general principles to particular fact demands considerable theoretical knowledge — of sociology, of economics — and considerable imaginative powers. Moreover, if one sees the task of a political movement as being not merely to devise a policy but also to canvass it—as surely one should—then the problems confronting the Left are further multiplied. They amount to a vast educational programme: first to learn, then to teach.

I do not think that their measure has been fully taken. Schoolmasters—perhaps not the best of them—have a well-known habit of never admitting when a subject becomes more difficult: they feel that to do so would only "dishearten" their pupils. This method may, for all I know, achieve marvels in the classroom: but in the political arena it seems to me nothing short of disastrous. Yet this method has now been adopted very generally by the press of the Left: the editorials of the *New Statesman* provide one, week after week, with examples of it. There are two different forms it takes. On the one hand, shrill vociferous demands, directed presumably towards its own party, for a "true Socialist" policy on this issue or that, on education, or on the Middle East, or on H-bomb tests, as though in each case it was quite obvious what a Socialist policy was, whereas in fact these are issues on which Socialism is either silent or ambiguous; on the other hand, violent attacks launched against its opponents for the policy actually pursued, attributing the lowest motives to those

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responsible for the conduct of affairs, a practice which gives the dangerous impression that anyone who is not either hideously prejudiced or hopelessly stupid would know exactly what should be done and would do it. Both practices may have their short-term uses. But ultimately they must be wrong in that by glossing over difficulties that should be faced, they distract attention from problems which are only likely to be solved if they receive it to the full.

THERE is, I am aware, a view or conception of politics on which this diagnosis of mine becomes unacceptable. According to it, the end and function of any true Socialist policy is primarily that of keeping the forces of Socialism in motion: and in consequence the true criterion whereby any policy should be judged is its success or otherwise in doing so. At certain periods, the choice of policy may be harder than at others: but this is never because of any inherent difficulty or complexity in the issues on which policy must pronounce, but is a function solely of the apathy, the indifference, the defeatism of the forces to whom the policy is supposed to make its appeal. The difficulties are always all on the teaching side, not on the learning side. This conception of politics is certainly to be found amongst some intellectuals of the Left. It appears, in a somewhat muffled form, in one of the few interesting and curious works on politics to appear since the war, Aneurin Bevan's *In Place of Fear*. ("Muffled," I say, because Bevan says that a genuine socialist politician in making policy, if he is to avoid being exclusively "practical," should consider not merely "its applicability to the immediate situation" but also "its faithfulness to the general body of principles": but when he talks of "principles" he means, I think, not just certain rules or precepts, but the general lines of development of the party, the trajectory of the Socialist movement.) And it may well turn out that the so-called split within the Labour Party, of which we used to hear so much, in large measure hinged on the issue of this conception of politics. If this is so, then the difference between the left-wing and the right-wing of the Party is not so much a political difference as a "meta-political" difference: a difference as about the answer to the question, What should we do next?, but about the answer to the question, How are we to arrive at an answer to the question, What should we do next?

Now this "leftist" theory of policy, this advocacy of "passion in action" (to use a vivid phrase of Bevan's) seems to me to be quite unacceptable if it is taken as what it sets out to be: namely a theory about the nature of politics. However, it achieves considerable plausibility if it is reinterpreted and taken as a theory about the context of politics. As a guide in the making of policy it can only be nefarious: but it has its uses as a reminder of the difficulties that are likely to beset any policy decided upon. For in Great Britain the political struggle still occurs within the shadow of the Class War. A cold war it may now be, and like other cold wars one whose true issues have become somewhat obscured by the pragmatic alliances to which the two main combatants have of necessity had recourse. But, for all that, it still rages. If anyone has serious doubts about this, only let him walk through the streets of Chelsea or Knightsbridge on the eve of a General Election, and contemplate the row of blue posters which, apart from the window-boxes, are the only show of colour allowed to break up, to accent the line of the façades. And doubtless the experiment could be repeated in the residential quarter of any prosperous English city. Is this uniformity to be taken as proof of the superior political wisdom of the middle classes—or is it that they know only too well on which side their bread is buttered? We have become so politically genteel that few politicians care to raise the question. But whatever answer one gives to it, nothing follows about what policy one should pursue at any given moment: all that does follow is that however correct and reasonable, however well presented one's policy may be, this by itself will not win for it universal support. That must be fought for. "Leftism" is not a

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guide to action: it is a warning against inaction.

I HAVE suggested that the general pallor of Socialist thought in Great Britain at the moment is connected with the increased difficulty and complexity of the problems that confront it. But this is not the whole answer. For there would also seem to me certain forces, certain motives, that inhibit any serious effort to face these squarely.

Freudian theory teaches us that in the emotional development of the individual, the occurrence of certain difficulties and stresses at a comparatively late date may upset normal development and cause the individual to regress to an earlier phase in his life when certain traumatic experiences were sustained, experiences whose consequences have not hitherto been apparent but which in effect impaired his natural powers of resistance seriously and permanently. In the life of a political movement there would seem to be at work a tendency of an opposite kind. Faced by defeat, opposition, or indifference, the movement reverts not to a period when some wound was inflicted upon it, but to its greatest hour, to the moment when it enjoyed the highest prestige, when it was at the peak of its ambition and expansiveness. So, for instance, we find British Liberalism in 1902 trying to close its ranks by recapturing the moral fervour of Bright and Cobden: or French Radicalism after the loss of hegemony in 1912 returning to its traditional anti-militarism reminiscent of the great days of 1849 and 1869: or, again, before the First World War, Italian Socialism reacting against the "reformist" tendencies that had dominated it for the previous decade and resuscitating the activism and violence of the Marxist nineties, the great period of its expansion. The British Left is no exception to this tendency. If we take its recent history, we find there two great "imperialist" moments when it tried to rally all men to its cause. The first was in the mid-thirties when this was done under the banner of universal idealism: the second was in the mid-forties when it was done under the banner of universal opportunism. In the first phase, the Left was presented as, quite simply, the good cause: in the second, it figured, just as simply, as the winning cause. In many ways no two periods of its history could offer a better contrast—to see this we have only to set side by side the two sets of advocates it threw up, those in whom both the age and the movement found their most typical and authentic expression, the poets of the thirties and *The Times* leader-writers of the forties. Nevertheless the two periods had this in common: that neither of them provided or in any way encouraged the kind of atmosphere that is conducive to the elaboration of a complex, far-reaching, "utopian" political policy.

These "regressive" tendencies in Left-wing thinking are responsible for much that seems perverse or undesirable in the journalism of the movement: in, for instance, the political columns of the *New Statesman*, brilliant and provocative though these often are. But in order to identify these tendencies accurately, we need to discriminate carefully between the motives themselves and the accidental forms they assume: forms, that is, due to the accidents of history. For it is an accident of history that a common feature of the two great proselytising moments of the Left was an attachment to Russia: in the thirties as a *grande passion*, in the forties as a *mariage de convenance*. In the earlier period Russia was or appeared to be the kingpin of the *Front Populaire*: in the later, she was the successful and powerful ally. It is not therefore surprising that those who revert to the aspirations and emotions of these two periods, should also revert to this old attachment. But it must be appreciated that, as with so many cases of sentiment fanned to life by loyalty, the object of the sentiment is by now purely coincidental, fortuitous, irrelevant: it tells us something about the past but nothing about the present. It also happens that Russia was admired by the British Left in its great days, and so when the Left falls into a sentimental condition, this old admiration is revived. The situation here is much like that of a certain kind of Liberal a generation or so ago who, brought up to admire Italy and everything

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Italian as exhaling the very spirit of liberty, was never altogether able to emancipate himself from this sentiment even after the rise of Mussolini had made it a historical curiosity.

It is therefore not the "pro-Russian" aspect of *New Statesman* journalism that should detain us. That is merely the manifest content of the tendency, and as such of no real significance. There is in England nothing corresponding to the *opium des intellectuels* analysed so cruelly by Raymond Aron: there is, that is to say, no genuine sympathy with the creed and doctrines of Marxism. What is significant about the orientation towards Russia is the motives that lie behind it. To understand them is to understand the obstacles that stem the proper flow of left-wing thought in this country.

OF THE two old loyalties, it is on the whole the tough opportunism of the forties that is the real danger to Socialist thinking, not the weak idealism of the thirties. When Engels said that, with the advent of Marxism, Socialism changed from being utopian to being scientific, what he said was profoundly true if we interpret it as referring to the grounds, rather than to the content, of Socialism. For the real dividing-stream in left-wing thought runs between those who support and argue for Socialist society on grounds of principle and those who do so on some other, "naturalistic" ground—because it is more likely to be efficient, because it fits in with the pattern of history, because it is in one's interest, because it is inevitable, because it is with us. Those who stand on different banks belong to different sides. And it seems to me that any discussion of Socialist policy by the utopian side that constantly employs the arguments appropriate to the other side or, worse still, does not recognise the difference between these two sides, does a grave disservice to the cause of Social Democracy.

But that is not to say that the old spirit of the thirties is without its dangers. For though the essential feature of Democratic Socialism is the application of certain general social principles to the facts of society, whether the principles actually employed are the correct principles, absolutely, categorically, without qualification, is something that, here as elsewhere, should never be allowed to become a closed question. The process of applying principles—in, that is to say, a hypothetical fashion to possible cases—should always be seen as also a process of testing these principles. Let us take, for example, perhaps the most difficult of the outstanding social problems of today: that of Education. The relevant principle here is that of Equality. The first task, which is extremely complicated, is to apply this principle to our present educational system and to see precisely what it enjoins us to do: the second task, which is no less necessary, is to set these injunctions side by side with what we ordinarily feel to be right in this matter, and to see whether they agree with it or, if they disagree with it, whether they do so so violently, so decisively as to cast doubt on the principle that leads to them, at least in its existing form. Suppose, for instance, that the principle of Equality demanded that the present machinery of private education should be immediately abolished: and further suppose (and all this is only supposition) that it was established beyond all doubt that this, if done, would result in the lowering of educational standards for a long period—should we not consider whether we have here at least *an* argument against the principle of Equality as we know it?

What I am advocating is empiricism. "Empiricism" has, I know, a bad sound in the vocabulary of British politics: for, taken over by one of our great parties, it has come to mean the rejection of all principles in politics, indeed of all serious political reflection. But this is not what I mean by it. I want to use it in a sense closer to its philosophical usage. The political empiricist is the man who holds principles but holds them in a certain way: that is to say, any principle that he holds, he is prepared, given proof, to reject. Opposed to the political empiricist is the political puritan. The political puritan just does not see how he ever could be given such proof. Any awkward consequences that one of his principles might have, he sees as a test of him not

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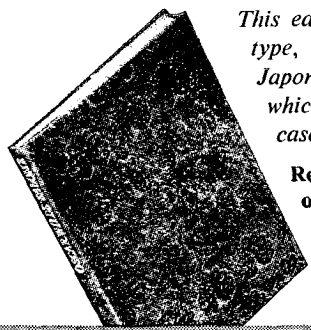

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of it. Now, the political puritan receives his full measure of admiration in history and literature. Personally I cannot see why. For I cannot see how it could be right to prefer, consistently, an abstract principle to the feelings, hopes, fears, and desires of human beings which it overrides: and I am suspicious of those who do.

Now it should be obvious that the spirit of the thirties, fervid and dramatic as it was, could scarcely be more unconducive to this difficult, painstaking process of at once applying and testing general principles. Conveniently, the field of Education provides us with a good illustration of this incapacity. A typical work of the thirties, one that has about it by now a "period" character, is a pamphlet by Auden and T. C. Worsley called *Education, Today—and Tomorrow*. It is worth rereading. For in its unquestioning assumption of very general principles and in its wild indifference to possibilities, it is, I should have thought, a perfect model of how such matters should not be discussed.

THE task I have outlined as lying before British Socialism is not an easy one: and its uniqueness may obscure this. For quite apart from the special difficulties I have attempted to diagnose, in a modern society decision of policy is always bound to be more difficult for a left-wing party than for a right-wing party. A left-wing party has always more irons in the fire. Nowhere is this truer than in Great Britain. Of the two great parties, the Labour Party is a party of principles and of interests, the Conservative Party is a party of interests. I do not intend this polemically or provocatively. For it has, after all, been a great boast with many eminent Conservative thinkers that they and their party do not hold with, have no truck with, principles, or doctrines, or large general theories about society and politics. And while others, it is true, have produced certain general conservative principles such as Prescription, or Church and State, these principles can in one sense be regarded as occuring only "trivially" in party policy, can be treated as epiphenomenal in that at no point do they come, nor is it envisaged how they might come, into conflict with the interests traditionally protected by the party. Within the Labour Party, however, the situation is very different. For not only are certain principles explicitly advocated—the principles of '89, one might say—and certain interests advanced, but the principles can and do conflict with the interests. To take two obvious cases: the clash between Liberty and the practice of the "closed shop," and the clash between Equality and the issue of a wage differential between skilled and unskilled labour. A Socialist policy may well have to reckon on having to come up against "the forces of material interest" twice in its career: that is to say, in the first instance when it is propounded within its own party, as well as later when it is championed against the other party.

Few political movements have ever achieved the task I have described. In this country the Liberal Party did for a short while, under Gladstone. The example could well be taken to heart. When and only when Great Britain has a Gladstonian Left, a Left that has, for instance, declared itself univocally on the two great political issues of our society, Education and Colonialism, will the persistent rumours about the ossification of the Left be laid to rest.*

* These reflections upon the state of left-wing thought were written before the publication of the new Labour Party pamphlets, *Personal Freedom* and *Towards Equality*. It would be nice if I could say that in the light of them I feel inclined to modify what I have written. But I don't. I have said that there are three tasks that lie before the Left: it must elucidate its principles, it must apply them, it must test them—the last two being merely different aspects of the same problem. In neither of these two pamphlets is this done. In each case the elucidation is perfunctory. And the principle is then applied only in cases where a positive result is certain. The difficult cases, the crucial experiments are avoided. Where one looks for thought and reflection and detachment, one finds only propaganda. It is far from certain that these pamphlets even point the way to what needs to be done; for it is as likely that they will block it.

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And now what of the Right? Is there really a new Conservatism—or are we deceived by a handful of boisterous journalists? The answer is far from clear.

It is certainly true that there are a number of writers and columnists who both call themselves Conservatives and also hold views that Conservatives used not to hold. But this in itself does not amount to a new Conservatism: it is merely a new expression of the old Conservatism. For since the 19th century, when Disraeli "stole the Whigs' clothes," it has been the practice of the Conservative Party to take over its opponents' programme after a decent interval of time. It is only because the Party between the wars allowed the practice to lapse and the interval to become indecently long, that the present readoption of it calls for comment at all. To be unduly impressed by it is to misunderstand the principle of identity that binds together Conservative policy as at one moment and as at another. For these purposes the Conservative Party should be compared not to the fish that comes out of the sea, but to the sea itself: it it not the phœnix but the fire.

It follows then that something rather more than the mere "acceptance of the Welfare State" is required if we are to allow the claim that there is a new Conservatism. Do we anywhere find evidence of this something more? Is there any new vision of society or politics to sustain the claim?

Left-wing theory traditionally finds its expression in principles, right-wing theory in arguments: in arguments, that is to say, directed against those principles. Very roughly, these arguments fall into two categories: what might be called arguments from Knowledge and arguments from Ignorance. Those who argue from Knowledge attack the Liberal Society on the grounds that they know better than the liberals do what society should really be like. Those who argue from Ignorance attack the Liberal Society, on the grounds that we can never know enough to say what society should be like: either because the moral issues or because the practical issues are too abstruse for human powers. In this country, arguments from Knowledge are favoured by Tories, arguments from Ignorance by Conservatives.

(*En passant*, it should be pointed out that there is another kind of argument often used by conservatively minded thinkers: that based on the alleged inconsistency between left-wing principles. But such arguments are not peculiarly conservative. Indeed no right-wing thinker has analysed so profoundly, so unflinchingly the possible clashes between Democracy and Liberty, or between Liberty and Equality, as the two greatest liberal thinkers of the 19th century, Mill and Tocqueville: the peculiarly conservative contribution to this discussion seems to be merely the note of sardonic pleasure with which these old analyses are rehashed.)

Can it truly be said that either of the traditional right-wing arguments has received a new formulation of a kind singularly acceptable to our times? Since the war the old sceptical arguments have been heard much of; and in Professor Oakeshott have found a distinguished, if not prolific, advocate. To Oakeshott a society is like a language, or like a game. Its essence lies in certain rules and conventions, and if we would live in it, then we must act as we would if we would speak a language or play a game—we must learn its rules and abide by them. And the "must" here is not one of prudence, or even one of obligation: it flows from the very nature of society. It follows from this that there can, in the first place, be no general science of society, that is to say, no body of laws describing how all societies behave, and, secondly, there can be no general ideal of society, that is to say, no view of what all societies should be like. For the former would always be false, the second always presumptuous. The main task of the political thinker must be his own "political education": and this education is of necessity always particular. The burden of Oakeshott's political thought might be summarised by adapting one of Marx's famous dicta: "All previous philosophies have sought to change the world: our task is to understand it."

This view which is expressed by Oakeshott with such elegance and wit of style has won

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favour with, and is said to have exerted a great fascination over, the young. It seems however to be vitiated by a central paradox. While encouraging "concrete" political activity, it is itself an entirely abstract thesis. "Sceptical" in appearance, indeed in profession, it is in effect far more sweeping, far more general than the theories against which it is directed. For the body of evidence required to establish the thesis that no theory of society is possible, would have to be far greater in bulk than that required to establish any one such theory. For it would be necessary to examine as evidence a number of such theories and in each case to show that the evidence for it was inadequate. It is a common and disastrous superstition to assume that propositions negatively expressed claim less than propositions affirmatively expressed.

Moreover, not merely does Oakeshott's theory on this score require for its confirmation more evidence than would be required by his opponents', but he produces none in favour of his whereas history produces some in favour of theirs. That there are some general laws operating in society has received in recent years extremely strong confirmation from the changes that have been brought about, that is to say, deliberately planned and effected in accordance with laws, by those with whom Oakeshott doesn't hold.

The power of these views over young intellectuals is, as I have said, something difficult to assess. If it exists, it exists, it seems, in a vacuum. For it is noticeable that, for instance, it has not led to any very considerable interest in the conservative literature that is being produced on such a large scale in America and France. With striking impartiality, the very good books of this school like those of Monsieur Raymond Aron and the very bad books like those of Professor Russell Kirk have been received with the same cool indifference. Again, the new brisk journalism of the Right—which is one of the most potent factors in creating the impression of vitality in that quarter—seems singularly detached from theory or thesis: apart from a belief in the differentiated state, which is after all a minimal requirement for a Conservative, the columns of the *Spectator* display roughly the same attitude towards Conservative theory as those of the *New Statesman* do towards Socialist policy—that is to say, a passionate conviction *that* it is, along with no positive indication of *what* it is. Nowhere has this fundamental Conservative indifference to theory been better displayed than in the recent troubles within the Conservative Party. It must throughout be borne in mind that, whereas the so-called split within the Labour Party was to a large extent reported and written up in the press of the other party, our main source of information about that within the Conservative Party is the Conservative press. There is accordingly no reason to think that the general issues have not been fully aired. If this is so, what is truly remarkable is that at no stage throughout the whole incident has any theoretical basis for the split been produced, either *a priori* as a ground or *a posteriori* as a justification. I find it difficult to believe that a political movement is intellectually in the ascendancy when the party that represents it offers a spectacle reminiscent of the seediest kind of 18th century intrigue and ambition.

I THINK that much of this "new conservatism" becomes more comprehensible when it is interpreted not in intellectual, or even in specifically political, terms. In large part, it is a move against austerity, a move in favour of colour and excitement; a gesture of native romanticism. "Native" I say advisedly. For on the continent of Europe, romantic politics have been traditionally revolutionary politics, and the stock romantic figure in politics is the young aristocrat, the true product of his environment, charming and sensitive by nature, who, appalled by the sight of social injustice, cuts his ties with his own class and moves over to the other side of the barricades—Mirabeau, Mikos Wesselènyi, Herzen, Carlo Pisacane, Kropotkin, Karolyi. In England, however, this type has always seemed alien. Here the romantic figure has been the young man of socially unconventional origins, vulgar and brash, who, depressed by the drabness of ordinary life, has

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struck out in favour of some traditionalist theory of society which the traditional classes themselves have been traditionally disinclined to advance. Of this type Disraeli and F. E. Smith are supreme but not solitary examples. And as testimony to its hold over the political imagination of this country, we find by their side a number of others of unmistakably aristocratic origins, trying hard to cast off the trappings of their class and to appear as flashy adventurers: Lord Randolph Churchill, Lord Hugh Cecil, Sir Winston Churchill. Now it seems to me that it is to this tradition of Tory rebelliousness that that strange mixture of frivolity and openmindedness, of bad manners and freedom from censoriousness which characterises the best writing of, say, the new *Spectator* and the new *Punch*, owes its being.

But this is not to say that its roots are all in the past. On the contrary it is associated with another and very modern feature of English intellectual life: and that is the new respectability attached to ambition. To follow the changing attitude of the intellectual classes on this subject, we can find no better guide than the imaginative literature of the last hundred years. In the 19th century the young, clever, and sensitive hero could decently number amongst his characteristics the desire and the resolve to do well for himself, to get on in the world. In the progressive novel of the first half of the 20th century, all this is changed. The hero is *de rigueur* a failure: perhaps a failure in that he never tried, perhaps a brilliant failure, but nevertheless supremely a failure. Today it seems as if there is a certain move back to the old 19th century standards. Certain young novelists have discovered what can only be called a new kind of innocence in ambition. A man, they seem to be saying, is more likely to be harmlessly employed in looking after himself than in crusading for the large generalised slogans of liberal doctrine, or in probing the weaknesses and shortcomings of some emotional entanglement: the favourite occupations of earlier heroes.

Now, in itself this new attitude towards ambition is not a right-wing phenomenon. Some of those who display it belong unmistakably to the Left. And in origin it owes much to the recent success of left-wing policy. For one of the reasons why ambition lay for so long under a cloud as far as the best writing of this century is concerned, was the widespread feeling that anyone who climbed climbed always on someone else's shoulders. Now, with the establishment of the Welfare State there has been an obvious drop of sensitivity on this score; and as an immediate consequence the contemporary hero has been allowed to let his eye rest rather more fixedly on the main chance.

But I have little doubt where this attitude will ultimately lead us. For if, as I have been maintaining, it is not true that the Left has of recent years seriously lost strength amongst intellectuals, what is surely true is that the typical figure of the intellectual left, the "progressive man," the *homme de gauche*, who for the last thirty years or so has been such a stock feature both of English life and of English letters, is on his way out. Who is to take his place as the contemporary type? One of the most likely candidates is this new hero. If he does, if he assumes the vacant place, he will sit there, I am sure, as something quite new in this country's society and literature, as the *homme de droite*: and by this I mean the man who adopts conservative views not because he was born into them, not because they suit his material interests, not because, quite dispassionately, he finds them true and the rest false, but because, better than any others, they reflect, they cohere with his image, his central vision of life. It was with a certain prophetic insight that in these columns a few months ago a *Spectator* journalist welcomed the irruption into politics at some early date of the heroes of Mr. Amis's and Mr. Wain's novels. One does not have to share the political, or the social, or the æsthetic, sympathies of Mr. Maugham to shudder at the thought of it all.

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Peter Wiles

In a Land of Unwashed Brains

A Polish Scrapbook

WHEN the Poznan uprising has been described, and Polish economics analysed for the learned journals, there remains a sediment of *choses vues*, the detritus of two weeks in Poland this summer. These are here presented, should they be of any interest to the general reader. The strong tendency to avoid dates, figures, even facts, is deliberate: I took no notes of these things. I also speak no Polish.

Cracow is fantastically rich in artistic treasures. If one excludes capital cities, where art naturally silts up in galleries, one might rank it fourth in Europe: Florence, Venice, Toledo, Cracow—equal, perhaps, with Siena. It is silly, of course, to try to establish a pecking order among such towns, but compare it more in detail with Siena.* Vit Stwosz—Veit Stoss to you—is vastly superior to Pinturicchio and there is one Leonardo—the girl with the weasel—for good measure. There is nothing comparable to the Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti in the Palazzo Pubblico—Slavs can only paint icons—but the sheer number of excellent baroque churches, the Gothic beauty of St. Mary's, the university buildings and treasure, and St. Florian's fortified gate in the walls, taken together easily surpass the architectural monuments of Siena. Throw in the view of the Vistula from the castle, and it becomes plain that Cracow must not be done in a day. I did it in a day.

The great Vit Stwosz altarpiece (in painted wood) used to be in the pro-cathedral of St. Mary's. It is now dismounted and set out in a large room in the castle. It has become an object of national pilgrimage, and everyone is intensely proud of it. Stwosz was a late Gothic naturalist of immense learning and Shakespearean comprehensiveness. In one panel he represents the "bad" characters each with a separate disease; their clinical accuracy is said to be perfect, and historians of medicine use it as a source. In others, flowers are shown with an accuracy worthy of Redouté; and botanists also treat the altarpiece as a serious source. Stwosz's vigour and inventiveness are almost vulgar in their excess; certainly one angel floating in his long robe is pure baroque. For years the Poles have claimed Stwosz as a Pole, but alas it is now quite certain he was born in Germany and German was his native language. What does it matter? you will say; nationality meant nothing in those days. But it means something in these days, and a nation does not wish to be beholden to its worst enemy for its greatest artist. Imagine that Handel (spelt Handle) had always been claimed as the greatest name in English music—and then

* But where would one rank Petrograd in such a pecking order? Once you get as far East as Poland you are constantly reminded how little you know of Europe.

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they found his birth certificate. Polish chauvinism is so humourless that serious stress is laid on the fact that Stwosz's birthplace was then Swiss territory. Anyway, Copernicus, Chopin, and Marie Curie are sound.

THE Germans mined Cracow but had no time to destroy it. But elsewhere they made a particular point of destroying—deliberately, in cold blood, and at much cost to themselves—all visible monuments of Polish history. And when the Russians came they of course did just the same thing in the German towns they were about to hand over to the Poles. Indeed both sides did much more: they destroyed whole towns, house by house, quite outside the fighting. Take the story of the diesel engine in German Silesia. The engine is on territory known to be Polish since a few days. The Soviet troops are smashing it to pieces. A Pole protests—"that engine is useful to us." "We built Socialism from nothing," replies the Soviet officer; "now you start with nothing too." Naturally the Lublin (Polish Communist) government did nothing to stop all this. These Soviet demolitions are a very sensitive subject, like Katyn or exports of coal to U.S.S.R.

Hence the widespread phenomenon of Polish Gothic (brick, latter half of 20th century). To the layman it is some of the best Gothic in the world. I saw only Warsaw and Poznan cathedrals, but Breslau and Danzig are said to be still better. The interiors are bare and simple for Roman Catholic churches. The few baroque memorials that survive look very well in them. A little baroque goes a very long way, and there is now just about enough of it.

Naturally the Gothic sculpture has not been restored, but one feels the Poles are capable even of that. They have spent money like water on the restoration of their cultural heritage. One of the three professors of fine art at Cracow university shows us round his treasure—a treasure such as all Oxford colleges together might just be able to match. I say "his" treasure advisedly: he is a notorious magpie and the terror of the financial people at the Ancient Monuments Commission or whatever it is called. "Yes," he says, "this government, the same government that you heard called murderers and traitors in Poznan, is much easier to deal with on ancient monuments than any pre-war government. I never have any difficulty with them about money." *Ars longa, vita brevis*—such is my combined impression of Cracow and Poznan.

In one of the main halls of Cracow university, simply and solidly timbered, stands a fantastically overwrought spiral staircase of wood. It leads, like something in a Dali picture, irrelevantly from the floor to a hole in the ceiling. The university "picked it up" when a nobleman's house was converted into an orphanage. An elderly Party member I know has bought one or two things since the war as a private person (quite genuinely, and without using influence). Nothing very much: just a Lucas Cranach, a Gerard Dow, a Houdon bronze, two or three pieces of 14th and 15th century sculpture.... They obstruct movement in his study. The sociology of art ownership was always a good subject; in Communist countries its fascination is limitless.

THE Palace of Culture and Science in the Name of Joseph Stalin is an appalling crime against economics and taste. It is a gift—genuinely a gift—of the Soviet people. It is about three times as high as Warsaw's only other tall building, carefully rebuilt by the Communists and still known as the Prudential building. A high gallery runs round it at—would it be?—three hundred feet. It is open and unglazed, a sort of wind-swept gazebo. A natural architectural feature for pigeons, it is so high up they have left it clean. The cost of this single gallery, which by the way is faced in stone, must be about equal to that of a block of working-class flats. But in Warsaw they live 1·9 to a room—and so, approximately, they do in Moscow come to that. The palace is in the same style as, but nastier than, any of the "tall buildings" (you are not allowed to say skyscrapers) in Moscow, which I have also seen. Has it a

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rude name? I ask; surely one million people must have thought up a rude name for it by now. But my guide is very *bien pensant*, he will not say. Later I learn that it has indeed a rude name: the Palace of the Cult of the Individual.

When Khrushchev was in Warsaw in March he was horrified by the Palace. He has many times expressed his anger at the wastefulness of Stalin-baroque in U.S.S.R.; here indeed was *ex post facto* justification for his historic speech. But in general I was surprised how little Soviet taste had affected Poland. This single horror was, after all, perpetrated by Soviet architects and builders. There is nothing else remotely like it in the country. Of waste there is plenty and to spare, and especially since 1950 the houses have been ill built. Town planning is very unimaginative, but extremely spacious; the problem is not where the children are to play but how to get to work. But the actual style is either plain and uninspired (as an economy the bricks are still unfaced), or a really splendid evocation of the nation's past. Thus parts of Warsaw have been rebuilt as they were in the 17th (the old market place) and 18th (Nowy Swiat) centuries: indeed better, as 19th century accretions have not been restored. Like Polish Gothic, these parts are intensely moving and genuinely beautiful. Economists, however, feel that much too much has been rebuilt in this expensive manner.

PAINTING again, although certainly no good, is quite un-Sovietised. For at least a year a modern Polish painter rather like Rouault, only very bad, has hung in the national gallery—room after mediocre room. Visiting Communist youth at the international games in August 1955 were astounded, and rightly, for the Tretyakovskaya in Moscow would never have dreamed of hanging him. This, then, was well before the Khrushchev speech and the Polish "declaration of independence". Or take the really excellent Silesian draughtsman, Pawel Steller. I am indebted to the economists of Stalinogrod (soon, no doubt, to be Kattowice again) for a beautiful collection of his heads of Silesian types. His speciality is the old, gnarled, and poor. Then in 1950 Socialist Realism breaks in: he switches to young, smooth and handsome Silesians. But the old quality is still very recognisably there. The only real fall from grace is a single picture, executed with an incompetence that can only have been deliberate, of the Stalinogrod Palace of Youth in the Name of Boleslaw Bierut.

But the main thing is that Steller went right on drawing. The pre-war intelligentsia was not destroyed, hardly even demoted. It just ducked under for six years, resisting the worst importations even then; and now sense and sensibility are returning in every field from politics to painting. In the U.S.S.R. not even the children of the 1913 intelligentsia are available, for their homes were broken and their children denied education. There was no continuity, except for a small circle in Leningrad—and the German siege of that town killed most of them. The new intelligentsia has yet to develop its critical faculty: much of the nonsense is actually believed. In Poland the self-same people re-emerge.

THERE has been, then, no "Capture of the Polish Mind."* These are mostly ordinary Western people with a straightforward Western understanding of events in their own country and abroad, and normal Western tastes. I have been re-reading on my return Czeslaw Milosz's *The Captive Mind*. It is not about the Poles that I have met. It is too intelligent and too emotionally complicated. I do not doubt that it is a true account of Mr. Milosz's own mind, and of his four friends' minds. But poets are exceptional, "of imagination all compact." Economists and civil servants are simpler and more stable, and also more fortunate, since *innere Emigration* is easier for the uncreative.

* This passage was written before I read the admirable article of Mr. K. A. Jelenski in ENCOUNTER, August 1956. He has anticipated me very completely, but the point is so important it can bear repeating.

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Thus Mr. Milosz:

> The Method, the Diamat—that is, dialectical materialism as interpreted by Lenin and Stalin—possesses a strong magnetic influence on the men of the present day. In the people's democracies, the Communists speak of the "New Faith," and compare its growth to that of Christianity in the Roman Empire.
>
> For several years I carried on a debate with those of my friends who were yielding, little by little, to the magic influence of the New Faith. The debate went on in my own mind also—more than a debate indeed, since that word gives no sense of the emotional stress which I experienced. As the nerve-centres of the country were mastered, one after the other, by the adherents of Moscow, I was forced to abandon my philosophic beliefs one after another, if I was to keep from throwing myself into the abyss. The abyss for me was exile, the worst of all misfortunes, for it meant sterility and inaction.

Ordinary people, however, just disagree with what they read in the newspapers, and leave it at that.

Of course the *quality* of free thought deteriorates, because it is—or was—dangerous to discuss it with others, and difficult to replenish it from new Western books. And no doubt over a longer period than six years this loss of quality would have diminished its attractiveness to youth, which might also have succumbed to sheer educational pressure. But as things are, few heads have been set buzzing with the eternal drone of the régime's agit-prop.

There is a tendency among Western intellectuals to prefer always the most dramatic and psychological explanations of events behind the Iron Curtain. Thus the Soviet confessions and show trials were explained by Arthur Koestler in his *Darkness at Noon* by a most interesting thesis: surrender to the appeal for Party loyalty, self-identification with History, etc., etc.—largely based on the plea in court of one man, Bukharin. Those who were in prison at the time, however, and Khrushchev in his famous speech, barely mention these intellectual excitements. Their explanations are more sublunary: physical torture, deprivation of sleep, threats to families. So too, perhaps, with the Captive Mind. It takes more interesting minds than most of us have to get captured in such interesting ways, indeed to get captured at all. You can bring us up Communist, but you won't convert us.

CRACOW is the Quartier Latin of Poland; it contains the theosophists, existentialists and other eccentrics. It is also, with its innumerable churches, a religious stronghold. There is even a group of émigré Armenian (Uniate) Catholics from Lwow, who conduct their services in Armenian in a church specially lent to them. In a totalitarian country this sort of thing is intensely undesirable: the citizenry should be atomised and homogeneous. The solution has been to redress the social balance by founding Nowa Huta, a new town of c. 100,000 (Cracow has 300,000) whose sole basic employment is the vast integrated steelworks—"the largest in Europe." Between Cracow and Nowa Huta are about five miles of open country, which it is not planned at any time to build over; there may be an aerodrome and a park. Yet the old artistic centre and the new frontier town are under one municipal administration.

Horrid stories circulate about life in Nowa Huta. Without women or priests the young peasants, recently recruited off the tiny parcellated holdings of Southern Poland, take to crime and drink. Certainly they can't make steel very well. Neither, come to that, can I, but I have watched steel rolled often in Sheffield and can detect gross errors in the handling of the equipment. These were made rather often. Truth lies indeed at the bottom of a well: we all assumed it was because the workers were comparatively new to the job just as we had been told, and when we said so at the time we were not contradicted. But the next day we were told it had been a special training shift for absolute newcomers. In U.S.S.R. I should have assumed this was a lie: in Poland I am much less sure.

THE Thaw since Khrushchev denounced Stalin at the 20th Congress has been terrific. A lady bought a pair of shoes. They were factory-made not hand-made, so they

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fell to pieces at once as usual. She took them to the cobbler, and complained in a listless general sort of way about shoes. "Don't you see," said the cobbler, "these shoes were made before the 20th Congress." "It isn't a thaw," said Hilary Minc the planning boss, "it's a spring"—i.e. there'll be no cold snap, the weather isn't changeable. I incline strongly to agree, with one qualification only. If the intelligentsia is quite non-Marxist, as can be discovered at any party where there is vodka, and the youth of all classes is still more non-Marxist, as observation at Poznan showed, where is it all going to stop? In the end, surely only terror can save the day: either the security police must be re-activated, in flat contradiction to present policy, Khrushchev's speech, and everything else, or the Red Army must be called in, which is a violation of Titoism. The Polish Party is no more than a leaky bulwark, full of careerists, ex-socialists, honest Marxists (especially young ones), and other broken reeds.

Which brings me to the fellow-travellers. In Britain I think of these as dishonest or criminally stupid or both, and unlease the catch of my revolver. So also in Poland in 1947 or Czechoslovakia in 1948. But in a Thaw they look very different. Take Mr. X of Pax (the fellow-travelling Catholic body). "There goes X," said a member of the Central Committee of the Party (how solid is *he*, by the way?), "who wants to reconcile the Communists and the Catholics. I hope to God he doesn't succeed, because then everything will be forbidden." The saying goes of Pax that a good Catholic in modern Poland must be honest and clever and a member of Pax, but to be all three together is beyond the wit of man. I talked with X for some time: he is honest and a member of Pax. But he is still a very inspiriting phenomenon. First, he voted against the abortion law in parliament: an action which is so far the high-water mark, so to speak, of the Thaw. Secondly, he is quite safe to say what he likes, for he is Exhibit A of the New Polish Look, the walking proof that something has changed. So you don't have to ply him with vodka or coax him for an hour or catch him in the middle of an uprising to find out what he really thinks. Principally he wants an independent Catholic Party. Of course he can whistle for it, but surely it all helps if he goes on saying so. In normal times we think of a fellow-traveller as a man with a foot in the enemy's camp: in modern Poland he is a man with a foot in our camp. He has, also, more freedom to operate than a simple, honest enemy of the régime. In a Thaw, what fellow-travellers think today Party members will think tomorrow.

And here let us praise the Polish intellectual, from the longstanding Party member to the Catholic nationalist, from the Bohemian of the Cracow coffee-house to the precise young statistician of the central bank. For it was the intellectuals who took the initiative after Khrushchev's speech: they saw their golden psychological opportunity and with magnificent courage they toppled the shamefaced régime into liberalism. Here were *les valeurs éternelles* defended by those whose business it is to defend them—an expiation for the Treason of the Clerks. Particularly the poets. As an economist I have always irritably rejected Shelley's "unacknowledged legislators of the world" as an obvious untruth: has not Keynes claimed that for us?* But in the Poland of Wazyk, Slonimski, and Woroszylski the poet is indeed the liberator. It was the poets who spoke first and loudest: Wazyk even before Khrushchev's speech. Nor is this inconsistent with their having been captive minds *à la* Milosz: indeed the first and last named were.†

Not in police administration then, nor in economic policy did the *dégringolade* come first, but in the printed and broadcast word. And naturally, too, for publication is controlled by very few and setting up in type is not a lengthy matter: a whisper, a telephone call, and freedom raises its ugly head over-

* *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, ch. 24/v.

† They are not among the Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta of Mr. Milosz's book, however. There is a tradition in these small Slav nations that the poet fulfils Shelley's rôle: Shevchenko and Kupala were the heart of the national movements in Ukraine and Belorussia.

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night. To paraphrase Burke, all that is necessary for the triumph of good is that evil men do nothing.

Indeed there is tragedy in this: the Thaw can raise hopes in print that will not be fulfilled in the local police station for months nor in the shops for years. Hence, precisely, Poznan. Under Stalin there was hell for all; it was fair. But in the Thaw some things melt faster than others. The intelligentsia had breathed the air of freedom for months when the workers came out on to the streets for bread. And how unreasonable of them to come out just then: there was as much bread as at any time during the last sixteen years! Clearly their timing was due to the bad example set by their betters. But alas, you cannot print bread.

THE surest way to Polish hearts is to bring reliable information about U.S.S.R. The strikes at Norilsk and Vorkuta, for instance, seemed to be unknown. Anti-Russian jokes circulate, of course.

"Why do the Russians eat ice-cream in winter? Because they have no artificial ice."

"In Ukrainian *khrushch* is a rare word meaning a kind of beetle that destroys the crops."

"Russia has had three great Tsars recently: first a Marxist, then a sadist, then a tourist." "No, four: Vladamir *Mudriy* (the Wise), Josif *Grozniy* (the Terrible, as in Ivan the Terrible), Georgi *Neudachnik* (the Unsuccessful), and Nikita *Kukuruznik* (the maize-monger)."

At the 20th Congress Khrushchev asked what to do with Stalin's body. "Give him to us," said the Chinese. "We expose our dead on towers [*sic*—P.W.], and that will be quite suitable." "No, no," said Nikita, "that will never do, that's ancestor-worship." "Give him to us," said the French, "we'll put him in Les Invalides." "No, no, that will never do, that's hero-worship." "Give him to us," said the Israelis, "we'll stuff him away in a cave in the desert." "My God, certainly not. Last time you did that there was a Resurrection."

Then finally the Russian word for peace has a second meaning: "the world". Thus *Sovietskiy Soyuz khochet mir*—"the Soviet Union wants the world." But the Polish word for peace (*pokoj*) also means: "a room."

However, it must be said that the Russians —troops, civilians, and all—are very much less visible than the Americans in any West European country. The civilians are by nature worse dressed than the Poles, but in the same style; and the troops are sufficiently docile to be confined to barracks. The population believe passionately that their security policemen and army officers are Russians in disguise. That may be so, but I never saw one Russian I could recognise as such. U.S. papers please copy.

AUSCHWITZ (Oswiencim) is a carefully kept memorial. There are acres and acres of decaying huts in fields, most of which will surely soon have to be cleared for agricultural purposes. There is horror enough in the central block, with its torture cells (very few: mostly they just killed people), its *Arbeit Macht Frei* over the main gate, its exhibition mounds of hair, spectacles, suitcases, etc., taken from the victims. And yet is it so very horrible? The brick houses of the central block are pleasant and pleasantly spaced. Polish families with their children do the sights, and a coffee bar stands outside. Also the much lesser horrors of the present weighed heavily upon us: we came almost directly from Poznan, and outside the main gate there loitered a number of the KBW, the militarised security troops or Communist S.S. (they were quite peaceful and definitely off parade, but somehow it seemed appropriate). We also laid a wreath—a very miserable little wreath but there, we said, it's the spirit behind it that counts. Have you ever carried a wreath about for fifteen minutes before laying it? You feel an awful ass.

Quite contrary to my expectations the régime does not try to make capital out of Oswiencim. There it is, set out and explained with admirable clarity, as it would have been in France or Holland. Oswiencim speaks for itself: all possible régimes are better than this. I wanted an ambiguously worded message on the wreath, but am glad now my col-

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leagues would not permit it. Nevertheless, when one sees a big vulgar Communist wreath labelled "Down with Fascism" one cannot help thinking of Vinnitsa and Katyn, though they only ran into tens of thousands. From another *faux pas* on this occasion I was not, however, saved. A photograph of naked women going to their death in the gas chamber was displayed as "taken by a member of the resistance movement." What was the name of the resistance movement? I asked a guide with some heat. Why don't you give it its proper name, Home Army? The way you Communists pretend the Home Army never existed is disgusting. Genuinely distressed, he moved off to find out, and came back to tell me it wasn't the Home Army at all, but the local Oswiencim camp movement. Such are the penalties of excessive vigilance; profuse apologies followed.

Doubtless the Oswiencim resistance was independent because the Home Army would not enrol Jews. When all tribute has been paid, let us not forget that Poles are viciously anti-Semitic. Incidentally, another guide was partly Jewish. It was his first visit. We agreed afterwards that we were not as affected as we ought to be: the subject (four million gassed to death as biologically inferior) was too big for us. We were only small people, and would both eat a hearty lunch.

Oswiencim is the name of a flourishing county town.

WHY are the Poles so free? First because they are all brave: if they want to say something, they just say it. Now in a country like Russia or Czechoslovakia—or doubtless Britain—where only a normal proportion are brave, you can afford to arrest anyone brave enough to be indiscreet; moreover it terrorises the rest. But where everyone is that brave you don't know where to begin. Secondly they are all honourable: they are indiscreet but never treacherous. Thus many thousands were in the preparations for the Warsaw uprising in 1944, yet the Germans never got to hear of it (incidentally, no other occupied country in the world produced anything like the Warsaw uprising, and the defence of the Warsaw ghetto was also unique in world Jewry). Soviet society is riddled with *seksoty*, secret collaborators with the MVD who, owing to some stain on their past, can be blackmailed into spying. But to judge by the freedom with which Poles talk in front of strangers, there are few *seksoty* in Poland. The Polish security police must, it appears, find its own information. Thirdly, Party members seem to be more basically humane and honest than elsewhere. And, finally, genuine Communists, whether in the Party or the security police, are simply not numerous enough. Overt rebellion they can suppress. But mere talk is too common.

In Poznan the security police, when in civvies, wear standard blue shirts under blue coats. They also have bilious-coloured mackintoshes with pulleys all over them. These are rather substantial aids to recognition. Radkiewicz, the last minister of state security (its initials are U.B.), suffered a two-tier demotion. Way back when the Thaw was a twinkle in Khrushchev's eye, Radkiewicz became minister of state farms. After the 20th Congress he went, not as ambassador, to the Pekin embassy (in Hungary they sacked the successor to the original minister instead—the principle is the same). Once Radkiewicz was asked, what name would Poland take when it voted its own annexation to the Soviet Union? Polish Soviet Socialist Republic? "Oh, no: U.B.Stan" (like Uzbekistan).

One of my colleagues had a certain embarrassment. On the night of the Poznan uprising he described the fighting he had seen to the British press. He permitted his name to be used, and so it was. Three days later we all arrived in Zakopane. As usual, our Polish guides gave the reception a list of our names, divided into the pairs who would go together in the double rooms. But the hotel had their own ideas where to put us, and did not accept the list. Next day three electricians called to mend the bell in my colleague's room. The piece of the Poznan wireless jammer and some bullets he had collected as souvenirs were removed from his luggage. So now the electricians in Zakopane know there really was fighting in Poznan.

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Edmund Wilson

The Messiah at the Seder

A Story

A MIDDLE-AGED group of old friends had gathered for the Passover Seder. The host was the son of a rabbi and had studied for ordination in his youth at the Jewish Theological Seminary, but he now worked on the staff of a Jewish magazine. The men guests were a professor of Hebrew; a Viennese psychoanalyst; and a formerly active Marxist, who had fallen back on editing an encyclopædia. The scholar and the Marxist were accompanied by their wives, but the analyst was at present estranged from his, and the hostess's sister made the fourth woman: a handsome vivacious girl, somewhat younger than the others and unmarried. The Seder is designed to be a family affair, but it happened, on this occasion, that no children took part in the ceremony. Those of the host and hostess were under ten and had been put to bed; the Marxist and his wife were childless; the Hebraist's sons were married and living in other cities; and the adolescent son of the analyst had been carried off by his mother. Though parts of the Seder service are especially intended for children and cannot have their full effect without them, it was perhaps, in view of what happened, just as well that there were no children present.

None of the company in their ordinary lives conformed with the observances of Orthodox Judaism. Only the professor and his wife practised a kosher cuisine, and the dinner tonight was not kosher. But most had had some schooling in Hebrew, and all had been brought up in the old way. All enjoyed celebrating this festival, which strengthened the family unit, re-enforced the ties among friends, affirmed the solidarity of the Jewish people. In all this it differed much from any feast-day or holy service of their neighbours, either Catholic or Protestant—for it combined a family party like Christmas dinner with a ritual of resurrection that resembled an Easter Mass. The men, although mostly beardless—the professor was the only exception—all wore, for the special occasion, the close-fitting round black caps that made them at home in the Jewish world, and all read aloud from the Haggadah, the traditional Hebrew text, of which each had a copy before him. Two of the wives, who knew no Hebrew, abstained, but the hostess and her sister participated, since they, also, were the children of a rabbi. This text, in its lyrical eloquence, its variety and its flexibility—for it ranges from rhymes for the children to exalted psalms in praise of God—its invocation of sanctions that dignify the meagrest meal, its exultant reawakening of the Jewish sense of consecration, which springs to life among the human actualities of the homeliest Jewish family, was felt by them all as a spell that involved the long dinner-table, white-naperied, gleaming with wine-glasses and studded with the red and yellow bottles that

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contained the ceremonial wine, and connected them—there in a modern apartment of uptown West-Side New York—with the legendary past of their people, or rather, with something that was scarcely for them either legendary or even past, since it still lived among them there, and that was not what had happened but what they were living. For, dealing with events that—in terms of our time—must have occurred four thousand years before, written now in Biblical Hebrew, now in Aramaic of the Exile, now in the dialect of the Talmud, now borrowed from the hymns of the Middle Ages, blending Provence with Babylon, the Haggadah is timeless, excreted, accreted, as it is, by the anonymous processes of centuries, it concentrates in one vibrant poem the despairs and the hopes of millennia.

The celebrants at a Seder are supposed to recline in the manner of a Roman banquet, but today this is only approximated by a cushion or two behind the host. The ritual this evening, to be sure, was a little cavalierly treated, but it is one of the charms of the Seder that it combines the petition and the pæan to God with a comfortable informality, and they had not had tonight any intimation that something of importance was due to occur. The Hebrew had been fluent, the singing quite good. Almost all knew the music from childhood, and they could pick up the ancient cadence as readily as the words of a prayer. The sister-in-law of the host had a fresh and silvery voice that caressed and enlivened the spirit. The host had blessed the banquet, and the first cup of wine had been drunk. The host had rinsed his hands in a fingerbowl, and the Karpas had been passed around: sprigs of parsley dipped in salt water that represented the bunches of hyssop, dipped in the blood of the Paschal lamb, which, on the eve of the Exodus from Egypt, were used to mark the doorways of the Israelites, so that the Angel of Death would pass by them. He had broken the middle Mazzah, a brittle unleavened biscuit, and had stuck away a piece of it in the cushions behind him, and, with the aid of his neighbours on either side, he had held up before him the tray on which lay the egg and the shankbone of lamb: "This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. All who are hungered—let them come to eat; all who are needy—let them come and celebrate the Passover. Now we are here, but next year may we be in the land of Israel! Now we are slaves, but next year may we be free men!"

THE four questions were now asked—failing a child, by the youngest person present, who was the sister-in-law of the host: "How is this night different from other nights?" in respect to the four points of the ritual of dining—which leads to the announcement of the coming-forth from Egypt, with its pleasant little digression, the story of the five rabbis who sat up so late at night telling of this event that their pupils, the next morning, had found them still talking and had to summon them to morning prayer. Then the episode of the four sons: the clever one, the rude one, the simple one, and the one who is too young to know how to ask—to each of whom, in suitable terms, the meaning of the ritual must be explained. The goblets had been raised and put down, the Mazzoth covered and uncovered: the promise made to Abraham, the bondage in Egypt, the outcry to God, who remembers—"And God saw the children of Israel, and God knew"; the enumeration of the plagues of Israel, with a drop of wine spilled for each, and the summing-up of these by the strange mnemonic device—"the scorpion stung the uncle"—invented by the Rabbi Judah.

Then, the hymn of Thanksgiving to God, with its trumpet-like refrain "Dayéynu!" which raises the note of rejoicing at His benefits beyond hoping to Israel. They had eaten of the Mazzah, in remembrance of the bread, baked in haste without leaven, that their fathers had brought with them out of Egypt; of the Bitter Herb—a dish of horse radish—in memory of the bitterness of their misery in bondage, but sweetened by the Haroseth, a relish of chopped apples, raisins, and almonds—which stands for the mortar that the

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Israelite captives were forced to mix for their masters, and which has several other meanings as well. They had drunk the second glass of wine. They had rinsed their fingers in bowls and had listened to the benediction.

The hostess and her sister now brought on the dinner, for which each of the families present had provided one of the dishes. It began with the customary hard-boiled egg served in a bowl of salt water—at once a tongue-whetting hors d'œuvre and a reminder, again, of affliction, and went on to a main course of chicken, a permissible substitute for the Paschal lamb. They drank freely now, during dinner, in a non-ritualistic way, and the talk became very lively. They mingled discussion of current events with some effort to keep up the tradition of interpreting and analysing the service. They criticised the Jewish press, condemning it in all its departments, and not sparing the magazine of which their host was an editor. The analyst had some new jokes about Israel. The professor spoke with sharp severity of an eminent Jewish scholar, to whom he referred as "a *yeshiva bochar*." The sister-in-law, next to the analyst, allowed herself to play up to him with black sidelong glances, and even to propound to him one of her dreams, of which he gave her a frivolous interpretation: "Right off the bat, I'd say that the big black dog was McCarthy, for whom you feel an unconfessed admiration." The wife of the Marxist at one point inquired the origin of the word *Afikoman*, applied to the section of Mazzah that the host hides behind his cushion, and it was explained to her that, according to the Mishnah, this was derived from one or the other of two Greek words meaning, respectively, a festal song and an after-dinner dessert. This piece of unleavened biscuit is eaten at the end of the banquet, and figures as a symbolic substitute for any further form of entertainment. It is forbidden, when the Seder is over, to go on to any other affair.

Now the ritual had been resumed with the comedy of this Afikoman. The fragment of Mazzah is supposed to have been stolen by the youngest child present from the cushions where the father has hidden it, and to be ransomed, at this point in the ceremony, for the minimum price of a quarter. But this evening the part had been played by the handsome sister-in-law, who took an audacious line. When the host had reached for the Afikoman, and had exclaimed that it must have been stolen, and when the sister-in-law had produced it and had been asked what she would take to give it back, she had answered that he could give her in return for it that map of the Middle East, with the names all printed in Hebrew, that he had been showing them before dinner. He managed not to commit himself clearly to this, but she handed him back the Afikoman, which was now broken into bits and handed around the table. Everybody ate a piece. To eat a large amount of the Afikoman is said to prolong life, but though some remembered this, no one did more than nibble. Now the invocation of blessings began again, and the third ritual cup was drunk. "Pour out Thy wrath," they chanted, "upon the heathen that have not known Thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon Thy name: for they have devoured Jacob and have laid waste his dwelling-place. Pour out upon them Thine indignation and let Thy fierce anger overtake them. Pursue them in wrath and destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord."

At this point, the host left the table, went into the hall of the apartment, and opened the door into the outer hall. This was done for the Prophet Elijah, who circulates among his people and is present on certain occasions. A chair is set out for Elijah at the ceremony of circumcision, and is left there for three days, till the child is over the worst. At Passover, however, he had never yet come; he was expected—when the hour should arrive—to announce the Messiah's advent. When the fourth cup of wine was poured, a special silver goblet was also filled and set apart on the table for the prophet. This was called the Cup of the Redemption, because it was prepared for the moment when Israel should be redeemed and led back by the Messiah to its home in Jerusalem.

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The host had regained his place, and they were proceeding with the chanting of the Haggadah when the professor of Hebrew, who was opposite the door, became aware that someone had entered, and, looking up, beheld a tall old man whom he took at first for an Arab. This visitor was dressed in a kind of white cloak that had long sleeves and came to his knees, and a headdress that was a large folded napkin with the ends crossed under his chin and tied on with a heavy cord. He wore sandals, and his bare legs were sinewy, sunburnt, and hairy. His face was as dark as dark leather, and his coarse hair and beard were untrimmed. The professor stopped reading, and everybody looked up. The old man stopped just inside the door and, throwing back his head, began to declaim in a voice somewhat high and nasal and with heavily marked rhythms that gave almost the effect of singing. It seemed to them that they recognised the language as Hebrew, but they could not make out what he was saying. The guttural sounds suggested to some that the language he was speaking was Arabic. It was only the concluding sentence that they definitely understood, for it contained two of the most familiar Hebrew nouns: "Peace will now come over the whole earth!"

"WHAT a hideous travesty," the Hebraist thought, "of the ancient pronunciation!" He had read that among the Caucasian Jews it was a custom for some young man of the family to appear as a pilgrim come back from Jerusalem to tell them that the Redemption would not now be long, and he was not able to make up his mind whether one ought to resent a prank and say to the visitor, "That isn't funny!" or accept it as a possible feature of the Seder. In any case, it was up to their host. He remembered that the host's parents came from Southern Russia. He might perhaps himself have arranged this.

But now a second visitor presented himself, putting his hand on the old man's shoulder and making him stand aside. This was a lean but strong-shouldered little man, wearing the black Jewish skull cap and dressed in a blue double-breasted suit, who had high cheekbones, a vehement chin and a fine, sharply beak-like nose. His pale complexion was flushed, and a look of obsessive intensity was sparked from his myopic green eyes, but when he spoke, it seemed plain that he was forcing himself to avoid an exalted tone.

"I don't know whether you got what he said," he began. "This is the Prophet Elijah. He's just announced my coming."

"And who are you?" demanded the scholar.

"The Messiah, believe it or not.—You're sceptical. I think that we can soon convince you."

"I should question that," the Hebraist retorted, with a disagreeable smile. "Don't you know that the Messiah does not arrive till three days after Elijah's announcement?"

"If you really want to convince us," said the head of the house, smiling with more amiability, "you'll have to give us the Seven Miracles."

"Talmudic folk-lore!" said the visitor. "We don't need to bother with that. The more we speed things up the better.—But you're worrying about credentials. Well, first of all, I'll give you my story." It was evident that he had it on tap. "There was nothing at all out of the ordinary about my early boyhood. I was a run-of-the-mill child prodigy. My father made middle-class furniture in Brooklyn. He was successful but he hadn't had an education, and he wanted to make up for it through me. I had mastered the calculus at eight—I played the cello and composed at ten. I graduated from college at thirteen and did advanced work in nuclear physics. But the day I became Bar Mitzvah —the night after I'd been at the synagogue— I was lying in bed—awake—and I heard a voice that called me: 'Shemuel! Shemuel!' —my name is Samuel—and I answered, '*Hineyni*.' The Lord first spoke to me then. He told me I was to lead my people back to the land of Israel. Then, on May 14th, 1947 —just seven years later, and forty-seven, observe—I heard the Voice speak to me again. It

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told me that a year from that day the big ingathering would have begun and Israel would be proclaimed a free and independent state. I was just twenty-one at the time, and I was working at a laboratory on the atom bomb. The Lord, blessed be He, told me again that I was to lead back my people to Jerusalem—that the nations were to be governed from Zion and peace was to come to the world—just what Elijah was telling you. I threw up my job then and fasted, and then—when I was weak with hunger—I was constantly in touch with the Lord. He told me to work for an organisation that was raising money for Israel. That went on for seven years. Then came the final call—last year—the Eve of Passover and the day when Maimonides was born: Nisan 14—May 14th, Nisan 14, and both double seven—it bridges the gap between the calendars—and that gave me conclusive proof that it wasn't an hallucination: Note also that, according to our calendar, it was the year 5714—seven and double seven. I was told that a year from that Passover the time would have come to save Israel and for Israel to save the world. I've been working on the project all year. In a sense, we worked it out together. But it's only the upshot that interests you, and that is that the Redemption is at hand—you must get transportation for Israel at the earliest possible moment. The arrangements haven't all been made yet, but there'll be extra planes and boats put on—about that I can be quite positive—Well, there you have the story, and if you don't accept me now, you will a little later on, when the Power behind me begins to work. In the meantime, just to look at our friend here"—he put his hand on Elijah's shoulder—"ought to say something to you."

The old man, while the Messiah was talking, had been looking around the room with his dark and transfixing eyes, trained like guns from beneath shaggy eyebrows and flanking a magistral Hebraic nose. The young man quickly slipped aside and took down from the dining-room wall a Picasso and a Modigliani, which he set on the floor behind him, with their faces against the wall.

"I didn't want him to be smashing them," he said. "He might think they were Baal or something."

THE host's handsome sister-in-law began to feel rather self-conscious. She was wearing large dangling earrings and a bright-red damask gown. Personal adornments, of course, were permitted by the Talmud if properly made, and she remembered that there were earrings in the Bible, but Elijah did look terribly austere. Even if he were not Elijah, but just some insane fanatic, one would hate to be blasted by him! She dropped her eyes to the table: had she really been thinking, she wondered, about having an affair with the analyst?

"Won't you please sit down," said the host. He brought in chairs from another room, and his wife made places for the visitors. He was by no means persuaded of their authenticity but—well versed in rabbinical lore—it came back to him, as the old prophet took his seat and sat erect with one hand on his knee and the other in a kind of pocket that was formed at his breast by a fold of his cloak, that the pious Rabbi Judah of Regensburg had once, at a certain circumcision, been able to perceive that Elijah was absent from his appointed chair, which had augured—it proved, truly—that the child would abandon the Jewish faith. He could not, in any case, but be glad that the visitors had found them at their correct observances. His wife was a little embarrassed at having chicken instead of lamb, and she had hesitated about offering them the non-kosher dinner, but the host now invited them to eat.

"Not for me," said the young man, "but the Prophet might like a snack. This is the first time he's come to a Seder, and I think he'd enjoy eating something." A brief question in Hebrew brought a nod from the old man. The hostess went to heat up something, and in the meantime the formidable visitor, casting his eye about, identified the goblet set out for him and drained it at a single draught. This a little astonished the host, for the time had not yet come in the ceremony when the fourth cup of wine is drunk; but he remembered from

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Second Kings 23:22 that between the days of the Judges and the very late reign of Josiah no Passover had ever been celebrated —so that Elijah would not know the ceremony—although wasn't the ritual itself even much later than that?—the four cups of wine, he thought, had been mentioned first in the Mishnah.

But such questions were blurring in his mind. Had he drunk too many glasses at dinner, besides the ceremonial three? Or was he actually feeling the Power of which the young man had spoken, the Power behind him and Elijah? Did they not both have a radiance about them?—did they not, together, create a field in which was intensified and rarefied the yellow electric light? From the moment they sat down at the table, it was impossible not to treat them with deference. They brought silence, imposed themselves. It seemed most difficult to ask them questions. Yet the thought had dawned in every mind that the self-presented Messiah was one of those forced infant prodigies who break down from precocious effort. Had not the nocturnal call of the Lord been suggested by his name Samuel? The analyst had been watching him shrewdly, had noted that he had left off the glasses without which he was nearly blind in order to make a better impression, that he had had some experience in public speaking and, physically so unprepossessing, had acquired certain tricks of tone to propitiate and win an audience. Yet the gaze now laid bare by the discarding of his lenses had about it something fervent and gentle that first touched, then evoked respect; his passion, so determinedly repressed, as he told about his call from God, seemed to burn away a commonness of accent.

The analyst itched to examine him, to lay bare the links of suggestion, the mechanism of instinct and impasse which had braced him to the strength of his delusion. He himself had been very careful not to push his own son too much; but then his wife, once a patient of his, had messed the relationship up, and might, he feared, make the boy another neurotic. The childless wife of the scholar was wondering whether her husband, a despotic and pitiless pedant, would have tried to turn their boy into a prodigy, and, having sometimes indulged herself in the dream of an ambitious son who would become a big business executive, was just as glad she had not had to risk it. The hostess, bringing on the hot plate, had asked the young man again whether he was sure he would not have a snack—she could see he was starving himself. "There's no fasting on Passover," she smiled. But he dismissed it with a negative nod. She thought of her own fat-cheeked children: she would never, she told herself, allow them to go rocketting out of her orbit; but maybe his parents were dead!

A CONSTRAINT fell upon the whole company. The Marxist was the first to break through it. "Let me ask you a practical question"—he put it to the Messiah as man to man: "Do you expect all the Jews in the world—all the Jews that aren't in Israel already—to emigrate with you there?"

"In the long run, we certainly expect it, but we're not giving everyone the call tonight."

"May I ask what your principle of selection is?"

"Only those that are holding Seders. We figure that we at least have a chance with *them*. They include, of course, a number of non-believers, or people who think that they are, but the fact that they celebrate Passover would indicate that their ties with Judaism are not completely severed."

"Will you have the time to call on every Seder—tonight or tomorrow night?"

"I visit many Seders simultaneously. Between 7 a.m. today and 7 tomorrow morning, I am visiting every Seder from Oslo to Valparaiso."

This stopped the questioner for only a second. "How do you manage that?"

"How do Milt Berle and Monsignor Sheen manage to appear at the same time on every TV screen in New York?"

"That's only a projected photograph, but you're present with us here in this room, and

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you say that you're also present at a number of other Seders."

"That's correct. You can see me here; you can hear me; I can handle those pictures; but all the time my real basic self is at my headquarters on Ninety-First Street directing the whole thing."

"I see," said the Marxist.

The analyst took it up: "Can you tell us how this is accomplished?"

"You wouldn't be able to grasp it. It hasn't been worked out by man, so the steps would be unintelligible. I don't understand it myself. It's only the Lord, blessed be He, Who makes it possible for me to do all this."

Another queer but apposite reference came back into the mind of the host. The learned Lipmann-Mülhausen, in his *Sepher ha-Nizzahon*, had dealt with precisely the problem of the appearance of the Prophet Elijah simultaneously in different places, and had disposed of practical objections in terms of the pervasion of sunlight and the ubiquity of the Angel of Death.

"But supposing," pursued the Marxist, "that your call is successful tonight. There surely isn't room in Israel for all the dispersed Jews holding Seders."

"We won't be confined to the present area."

"How so?"

"Well, just give a thought to those plagues you've been reading about in the Haggadah. You're going to pick up the paper tomorrow and see that all the Arabs are dropping dead."

The Marxist could not help smiling; the Hebrew scholar sneered. The analyst asked a question in his professional matter-of-fact way: "And how will *that* be accomplished? Bacteriological warfare?"

"You're a long distance behind us again. It's done by a simple vibration—but not, in the crude sense, electrical. Don't worry about the humanitarian angle: death is instantaneous."

"You'll have a disposal problem," suggested the Marxist.

"The bodies crumble to dust. They blow away and mix with the sand."

"Will the other countries," the Marxist inquired, "accept Jewish hegemony? If I understand you, that's what you aim at."

"They will see we have the Lord behind us, and our prestige will rapidly increase."

"You're not afraid," the Marxist pressed him, "that pulverising all the Arabs will create a bad impression?"

"It'll be the most conspicuous miracle since the crossing of the Red Sea. Who cares about Pharaoh's army?"

"I'm interested"—the host changed the subject—"in the theological aspect. Is there to be a Day of the Lord?"

"There is."

"Would you care to develop that subject. Maimonides tells us that the dead are to rise."

"We can't do anything with that at the present time. We've already got enough mixed elements. And even with the formerly Arab areas, we're not able to accommodate everybody—the dead as well as the living."

"What about reward and punishment?" the hostess's sister asked. She had already had two serious love affairs, one with a married man.

"Yes," said the host: "we read in Saadia that everyone will be steeped in a divine fire, and that this fire will shine for the redeemed without burning them, but burn the unredeemed without shining for them."

"Saadia is not the last word. Maimonides is not the last word," the Messiah replied with assurance.

"But there *will* be reward and punishment?"

"Correct. There will be what I have termed an Assize of Exclusion—exclusion on rigorous principles."

"What will happen to the people excluded?"

"Will they be pulverised?" inquired the analyst.

"Only Arabs will be pulverised," the Messiah replied. "Jews who are unredeemed will not be permitted to live in Israel."

"And you," said the analyst quietly, "are to be the judge of Redemption?"

"With the help of the Lord, yes."

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"I am wondering," said the host, "how these things are to be decided. If it is a question of observance of the Law, there is nobody in this room who would qualify."

"So far as observances go, we have of course adapted ourselves to the modern developments of Judaism. A good many of the observances, as the Name well knows, have long ago outlived their usefulness; some are unscientific. There's no question of discrimination against members of Conservative or Reformed congregations—or even against good Jews who don't go to the Temple at all. But a minimum of observance we do demand —that's why we begin at the Seder. The Commandments, however, are a different matter. That's where we go along with Maimonides. Grave infractions will be hard to outweigh."

"But of course you will have other criteria?" the Marxist asked a little aggressively.

"Of course: our decisions will be made in accordance with a code of morality which has been formulated by strict definitions."

"It hardly seems fair," said the host, "that we shouldn't have been told about this." His wife, the rabbi's daughter, firmly backed him up: "If we've never been told this code, how could we know if we were violating it?" "And they're asking us to go back," thought her sister, still uneasy on the score of the Seventh Commandment, "with the risk of being thrown out!"

"It's based on the Ten Commandments, and it conforms to the best tradition of Judaism. It's an extension of the Commandments themselves. We interpret them in such a way as to take into account the new conditions that have come to prevail since they were first handed down. That's all I can tell you now."

"Couldn't you give us an idea," asked the analyst, "of the way in which this system of interpretation would work in a specific instance?"

"It's useless to discuss it," the Messiah declared. "You'll be able to learn something about it when you see it applied in practice. But actually you'll never be able fully to comprehend it. The wisdom of the Lord, as you know, passes understanding. Even the greatest prophets could not compass all His aims and methods, and even I, who am admitted to His confidence, must fall short of the full revelation. I've helped Him to organise the Judgment in an orderly and practical way, but for difficult decisions I must go to Him."

THIS seemed to arouse the Marxist, who, brusquely, took a bolder line. "You've spoken," he said, "of your training in the mathematical sciences, and also, to some extent, in music. Are we to take it for granted that you're equally at home in all the arts and professions?"

"Potentially, yes; but that's irrelevant. Our judgment in any given case is strictly a moral matter: it does not involve the specific skill in which the individual may be proficient."

"I ask because I don't understand how it is possible to judge an individual working in any field without thoroughgoing training in that field, life-long experience of it. Morality that is correct implies correct doctrine. Admittedly, as you were saying, the Torah and the Talmud—including the Commandments —are codes that belong to the earlier phases of social-economic development. They are useless to guide us today among the contradictions of modern society, the mazes of modern politics. And how can social theory, how can political procedure, be judged by a professional physicist? I assume that you are not a Marxist. For a Marxist it would have been quite impossible to work even a day, even an hour, in a laboratory making the bomb!"

"Marx is one of our prophets——"

"Exactly: the greatest of our prophets. But one has to study Marxist theory, to become adept at Marxist practice, in order to know how to discriminate between the true and the false. The false is sometimes subtly disguised: to detect it is not so easy. It is obvious, for example, that Stalinists—Stalinists of whatever complexion, and along with

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them, the heirs of Stalin—are summarily to be condemned. I should myself be glad to see them destroyed. But we are not to conclude from this that all the adherents of Trotsky are necessarily to be admitted: there are few of them—very few—who could make out a case for themselves as candidates for Redemption——"

"How about the Weinburgites, Harry?" the host interrupted with a mischievous look. "Have we got to let them all in?"

"I am raising a serious question," the Marxist, put out, replied. He had passed, without taking account of it, from an attitude of sophisticated scepticism to an acceptance of the crisis as real.

"I'm in fundamental agreement with Harry," the analyst intervened, "except that I'm an orthodox Freudian instead of belonging to a splinter sect."

"Weinburgism is normative Marxism . . ."

"All right: well, in just the same way, Freudianism for me is normative Freudianism — correct psychoanalytic theory. Siegmund Freud is another of our prophets.—You would agree to that wouldn't you?" He turned to the Messiah.

"In a sense, yes: I grant you——"

"In the deepest sense. And Freud has been as badly betrayed by those who professed to follow him as Marx or Moses has. I should not care to see any of these betrayers redeemed any more than Harry would the Stalinists." His debonair manner was ebbing and allowing to break through its surface the rock of fundamental conviction. "These loose and sloppy imposters, who disregard the discipline of the Freudian method, who cannot see the inevitability of the fundamental Freudian conceptions—who indulge and ruin their patients, who trifle with them and take their money, who leave them in the moral abasement of their unresolved complications, because they cannot face the problems themselves,—these problems that require effort, self-mastery, objective thinking—because they cannot face these problems, which involve unpleasant realities and difficult readjustments, any better than the patients can —such quacks should be treated as criminals! I should be glad to see them all pulverised, beginning with Jung! And here I agree in principle with what my friend has just said. It is impossible to judge of such matters unless one has been a practising analyst."

"You forget," the Messiah retorted, rising to the challenge to combat, "that I have behind me One who has spoken to Marx and Freud, and who can judge the deviations of their followers better than you can do."

"You forget," said the Marxist, "that every good Jew has that One behind him."

"When we get around to the dead,"—the Messiah took higher ground—"Freud and Marx will themselves be judged."

"And the Prophets?" cried the Hebraist. "Are *they* to be judged?"

Though the scholar had for a long time been silent, no one of the company present was more resistant than he. He had been scrutinising Elijah as the old man ate, and the suspicion of his authenticity had seemed to him conclusively confirmed. There is a Biblical word for knife—*m'aḵhelet*—which is evidently derived from the verb *to eat*, and this has been taken as evidence that the instrument was used at meals. Jealous of the credit of the ancient Jews as pioneers of civilisation, the professor was strongly of this opinion, and when he had seen the 9th century Elijah tearing the chicken apart with his fingers, he had with difficulty repressed his indignation. As the argument grew more heated, this burst. "But this alleged prophet here," he followed up, "it is certainly permitted to judge. I will give you my own judgment. No such Hebrew jargon as his was ever spoken in 9th century Israel, nor anywhere else then or since. This we know with complete certainty!" He turned to Elijah and addressed him in Yiddish: "Haven't I seen you on the stage at the Yiddish theatre?"

Elijah looked up from his plate, then glanced at the Messiah for explanation.

"You mustn't say such things to him," the young man warned the professor. "He's never learned any Yiddish—in spite of all the circumcisions he's been to—but he might think you're not being respectful."

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The little professor, however, was unable to contain himself. "Tell me"—he renewed the charge, this time speaking in Hebrew pronounced in accordance with his own system—"did you learn that language from the ravens?"

"Look out!" said the Messiah. "Don't do it!"

"Ravens?" the Prophet repeated, lifting his eyebrows in a piercing smile and stretching out both hands toward the viands. "I have no need of ravens here!"

"He thinks you're being hospitable," the young man said. "Now, let it go at that. Have the sense to let him alone."

"I simply want to put it on record," said the Hebraist, speaking to the company in English, "that I do not accept their pretensions. I regard them as bare-faced frauds—contemptible blasphemous frauds!"

"Listen!" the Messiah protested. "He still stands high with the Name. Remember what happened to those heathen cultists, when their god let them down on Mount Carmel!"

"Yes: lay off, Lou," intervened the host.

"Well," said the Messiah, rising, "there's no need for us to stay any longer. I'll be seeing you all before long. Any doubts you may still have tonight will all, I think, be rubbed out tomorrow."

Elijah arose and blessed them. He and the Messiah—in the general silence—left the apartment together, the young man closing the hall door behind them.

"Let's not argue now," said the host. "Let's finish the Seder first."

They took up the Haggadah where they had left it off; went through the thanksgiving hymns punctiliously and rather subduedly. The final words, "To next year in Jerusalem" — familiar though they were — frightened some, put an unexpected question to all. Out of bravado, the Marxist and the analyst—assisted by the vivacious sister-in-law—struck up the children's rhyme, the *Had Gadya*, that parallels *The House that Jack Built*, but this was allowed to peter out.

No one wanted to speak of what had happened. "Well," said the host at last—putting a half-humorous matter-of-fact face on it—"we'll be able to check in the morning whether the Arabs are dropping dead."

But though by this time it was well past midnight, nobody dared to suggest going out to buy a morning paper, and all the guests very soon left.

THE Messiah came to himself in his room on East Ninety-Second Street. It was at first an agony of reintegration, of recalling, and concentrating in his own single person, the projected multiple selves that had visited the thousands of Seders: fatigue, incoherence, unbearable strain. Gasping from the effort of self-dispersal, the pangs of organic self-reconstitution, he felt at moments that he could not survive, that he was losing his hold on the world. Then at last he became aware, in the grey early-morning light, of the familiar equipment of his room. He was lying on the wooden bed—close to the floor, with no headboard or footboard—that he had had a local carpenter knock together for him; and, opposite, against the wall, stood a desk, bought at second-hand, stuffed and piled with his folders and papers. There were also a small bookcase and some second-hand filing-cabinets. On the wall were hung a photograph of Zion and, spread out, the embroidered prayer-shawl he had worn at his confirmation. On a chair beside the bed lay a paper bag, a pasteboard container for coffee, and the glazed-paper wrapper of a chopped-egg sandwich with which he had fortified himself just before taking off for his visits. The foody smell of these was repellent. On a shelf he caught sight of the alarm clock which he had set for seven the night before, in case he should be still in his trance. He could not make out the time. Had it just gone off without his having heard it? Was it still to go off? He shuddered. How it would crash like a rocket-bomb on his already tortured nerves. Yet he did not reach for his glasses.

At this moment, the alarm exploded. He made himself rise to his feet, snatched the clock from the shelf and turned it off. He sat a moment on the side of the bed, then he lay down again. Ignorant of the ravages of

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dissipation, he had known the absymal depletions that follow intellectual excess. But the recovery from these had been hastened by the sense of accomplishment, triumph; the tissues of the mind soon mended. This morning there was a lesion that did not heal; a horror of failure, of bafflement, lay at the back of his aching brain. He shrank from assembling his experiences, reliving them, extracting their meaning. He tried to curb his natural quickness of mind, to lapse into stupor, to dull his wits. But inertia, self-obfuscation were repugnant to him, impossible for him. Spasmodically, with dim fits of fainting, the powers of his mind revived. More and more swiftly and deftly, like one who sifts the contents of an auction-room or sorts out a stacked correspondence, he examined, correlated, analysed his visits of the night before. But below the rapid movements of his mind the conviction of his mission lay stunned.

Then a deathly collapse engulfed him: "Rejected!" he exclaimed to himself. "Rejected!—I ought to have expected it! They resisted me, repulsed me, mocked me. It's I who am the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, despised and rejected of men!"

But he pulled himself together, sat up, and summoning, affirming the formulas of prayer, he appealed to the Lord.

"I have failed, my Lord," he said. "Your servant is sick in spirit."

Silence: a terrible fear made the young man sit tense on the edge of the bed, hardly daring to breathe.

Then came the expected Voice, filling, including the room: "You will be made whole again."

"But it hasn't worked out as we thought it would."

Silence: his desperate dread compelled the poor boy to go on, to revert to the self-confident tone with which he had talked to the Deity when he had first unfolded his plans: "Let me give you the picture as I see it. Undoubtedly you can throw more light on it—I beg Thee," he quickly added, lest he seem to qualify Omnipotence, "that Thou wilt aid me to understand Thy will."

"To begin with the Orthodox end: they would give one look at me and throw me out —on account of no earlocks and beard. Well, we more or less anticipated that. I thought—and I believe you approved—that, on the whole, it was more important to make the modernised ones feel at ease, and anyway that was the note we wanted to strike. I was counting on Elijah—though I'd never seen him then—to put it over with the Orthodox, but the trouble is that, being so first-millennial, so rugged, so much the product of a primitive outdoor life, he doesn't look much more like their idea of a Jew than I do. They thought he was crazy and I was a fake. In fact, that's what most of them thought. But the worst of it is that none of them —or almost without exception—is willing to accept my authority. They will accept their rabbi's authority, but—much as they pretend to adore you—they won't recognise the Over-all Power. That's the trouble with a church with no hierarchy. The Catholics would be able to swing it, but we've got no machine. Those fanatical old-timers in Mea Shearim won't accept the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. They set their own rabbi up against him, and they couldn't think of imagining a Day of the Lord in which anyone but themselves would come out on top. Of course, they're the lunatic fringe, but it's the same with all the Orthodox as against the Reformed. If we got the emigration started, they'd organise resistance against it; they'd work up a counter-propaganda and denounce me as another Sabbatai Zevi. And even those who have no worship are carrying the same narrow spirit into whatever their department is. The Marxists and the analysts and the scholars of every kind all seem to have their element of Mea Shearim. Every field has its own sects, its own rabbis, and the followers of any rabbi can't face the possibility that the disciples of another rabbi may be counted among the righteous. Why, there's even a music expert—a disciple of the Rabbi Schoenberg—who wants to exclude from Redemption all the modern composers who don't practice the pure twelve-tone system. He told me he would refuse absolutely to recognise

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the competence of our Final Assize unless I could give him the assurance that neither Block nor Milhaud would be passed. There's even a literary critic — a rabbi himself, with his own disciples—who says that he can't run the danger of finding himself assigned to a category which might include certain critics who don't subscribe to his doctrine. The core of that doctrine is that—evaluating in moral terms—there are only five novelists in English whose work can be taken seriously.

"And I'm speaking now only of the people that we thought we could more or less count on! You know how the rest of them are. They don't want to go to Israel at all, except maybe for a tourist trip. There are lots of them who don't even want to hear about it. These city lawyers and doctors and men who have built up businesses—half the time they don't care anything about Judaism. They're making good money somewhere or they're good at their work or both, and beyond that they don't want to be bothered. The only group, so far as I can see, that shows any real interest in the project are the unsuccessful small business and professional men who still go to the synagogue and who hope to better themselves. They think that their piety may get them further, when the Day of the Lord comes, than their abilities ever have. They and a few very young people who go to Hebrew-speaking summer camps and are passionately patriotic about Israel. But nobody else is with us. There's nothing like the response we hoped for."

THE Voice replied — the young man listened, in spite of his jaunty tone, with anxious and taut attention. "You must not say 'we,' " the Voice chided. "I was never so hopeful as you. I am no longer quite omniscient, as I used to be. Mankind sometimes gets away from me, as I never allowed it to do in the days of Eden and Babel. But I have my forebodings and doubts."

His confidence in his Deity not fortified, the Messiah fell to blaming his people. "The Jews," he came out with it, "could never agree, and why should we—why should *one* ever expect them to lay off their disputation even in the shadow of the Judgment Day? But the Exile, the Diaspora have aggravated this weakness. I am sure you are fully aware of the harm that has been done them by Protestantism. Living in Protestant countries, they have taken over the Protestant habits of thought: the idea of deciding for oneself, following one's own conscience, setting oneself up as a judge. Even among those who trust in Thee, blessed by Thy Name, each of them wants to feel that he's got his own private line to you. They're getting to be just like the Protestants—they believe in themselves, not you. Yet they got it out of our Bible—in a way it's there—and if it's there, you—Thou didst put it there. After all, Thou spokest to all kinds of people—Amos the shepherd or anybody could turn out to be a prophet. You must—Thou needst must have known what would eventually happen."

The Voice did not speak for some time. The young man dropped his face and covered his eyes, assuming a reverent attitude but leaving the point he had made.

Then It answered: "Did it ever occur to you that you yourself are lacking in faith, that you have become disrespectful in addressing Me, that you've taken a good deal into your own hands, and that, now that the result does not satisfy you, you are showing a reprehensible impertinence in attempting to take Me to task?"

It was the turn of the Messiah to be silent.

"I am an unworthy servant, Lord!" he cried. "Forgive me for forgetting that, weak though I am, Thy hand will be strong to uphold me. We'll see how they all feel tomorrow when they read about what's happened to the Arabs."

"The Arabs will be spared," said the Voice.

"They'll be spared? But I've promised they would be destroyed. You can hardly go back on that!"

"That would do no good now. If My people do not believe, this sign would not bring them to Zion. They will simply be convinced that the Middle East is a dangerous place to live."

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"But if all the Jews are spared?"

"I have some reputation for justice—though I believe you were implying a moment ago that I had not dealt justly with you. The Arabs, at the hands of My people, have already suffered some injustice, and many of My people know it. Why wipe them all out for no end?"

"Wouldn't the world be better without them?"

"They, too, have learned from My word—they worship Me, too, in their fashion."

The Messiah curbed himself from retorting: "You're getting entirely too broad-minded!"

"But what a garbling it is of Thy Word Thou gavest us!" was what he exclaimed aloud.

"You pity your own disappointment," answered God, partly quoting Himself, "and shall I not pity Ishmael, that great people of more than twenty million persons, who hardly know their right hand from their left, and also many camels?"

In the irritation caused by dismay, the young man had the impulse to sneer: "Do you have to give me those old gags?" But what he asked was, "There's not to be a Judgment Day?"

"Not at once."

"Am I still the Messiah?"

"You must live like any other man."

"But I've built my whole life up to this—ever since you first called me, ever since I became Bar Mitzvah!" He had to rein himself in not to cry out, "You can't do this to me! I might have succeeded in the Gentile world. I could have been a big commercial physicist. I was working on the bomb when you took me away—and I was one of the coming men. Now I can never go back: after tonight, I'll be listed as a screwball. You wouldn't let me make good with the goys, and now I can't lead my people back to Israel. What do you expect me to do?" But what he said was, "My Lord, be blessed to eternity. Thy servant has failed Thee: forgive him, I beg, and direct him to the path of righteousness. Where shall I turn next?"

"Go back to your old work," said the Voice. "Go on raising money for Israel. Maybe some good will come of it."

Christmas Holiday

IN THE december graveyard blossom moved
against remembering stone, softer than snow.
Along the christmas river we surprised
buds in the act of daring, sweet as toffee,
fields lay stretched and steaming in the sun,
and smoke was neat as feathers on the sky.
But discandying breath was only held. We heard
the afternoon turn over in its sleep
restless before it woke and blew us elsewhere
to practise separation like a scale
over and over until we run foolish.
To hoard and stroke the past till now is gone.
To forget the past is now or not at all.

Pat Kavanagh

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The Snag

A Story by V. S. Pritchett

THE marriages of middle age, the mad impromptus of reason, are the satisfying ones. By that time our obsessions have accumulated and assert their rights, and we find peace in the peculiarities of others. I am thinking of Mrs. Barclay and myself.

Our difficulty was the common one of turning a love affair into a marriage. We were held up by talking about it and by Sophia Barclay's belief in the sacred inferences of her divorce. She had been divorced from her husband in a noisy way years before I met her; she remembered what she wore in court; she was fixed in the occasion. This gave her a moral advantage over me that was too vested to be stimulating. She was like a cautious widow with a little capital but hers was that perfect disaster. Never myself having been married or divorced I had nothing equal to put into a settlement. We had reached a deadlock. And then my luck turned. Always rushing round to parties, often mixed up in her own or other people's love affairs, Sophia was the subject of a lot of gossip. Her taste for calamity involved her in a slander action which, for three hilarious days, the British public got to know of as "the Barclay case." Our lives suddenly became theatre. We spoke lines to each other which could only have been spoken on the stage. Here, at last, was the dramatic impetus that we needed. I must get her out of the limelight, I thought. I took action. It was July. I found a cottage in Wales where we could escape for a month. The Monday after the case I went up to get the place ready. On the Wednesday I was to return to London and fetch her and we would get married.

The cottage was a simple, cream-painted gate lodge with sharp Gothic windows. It was darkened by one of those tall firs that are often seen in rectory gardens and which are sometimes called Clergyman trees. One felt almost married standing under it. There was one advantage in the place from my point of view: it had no telephone. In our London days, Sophia's telephone had been my pestiferous rival, for Sophia lived by it. A few hours before returning to London to fetch her and on the day when I considered myself to be officially "running away with Mrs. Barclay" a boy arrived with a telegram from her. It told me to wait because she had decided to drive up to me. I had forgotten about telegrams. I saw that now I was not, in the strictest sense, "running off with Mrs. Barclay." The struggle for power had begun.

And so I see her as she was, on that day, driving towards me in the Border country. Sophia was a single-minded driver, but the mind she used was the unconscious. I see her green car unpredictable in the traffic lanes, waltzing at corners. I hear her shouted at by other motorists, I see her chancing the yellow light, parking in the wrong place at Cheltenham, backing into the traffic stream at the narrow end of Worcester, making cyclists swerve. She had a small pink hat half hidden in her hair, at an angle which gave her pale face the look of folly the waning moon has in a windy sky. I could imagine the restlessness of her pretty and conversable shoulders. I did not know what to do with myself until two o'clock when she was to arrive, and

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the changeable July sun made the hours slower. Over and over again I looked at flowers I did not know the name of in the garden. That tedium was broken. Telegrams began to arrive as suddenly as telephone calls. Two came from London, altering the time of departure. One came from Kidderminster saying she had taken the wrong road. And a final one from a town in Shropshire telling me to ring the hotel. I drove to the nearest telephone box.

"My dear," she said with her low, fussed, guttural emphasis on the second word. "Avoid me. Keep out of my way. I am poison. Ugh."

I could imagine her shaking her head in a disgust with herself which used to please me.

"You know what has happened? It is unbelievable. Tyre burst!" She added that there was an awful man in shorts staring at her.

This, I knew, would be untrue. While she was telephoning Sophia would be regarding the man in shorts. Her ice-blue eyes would be staring in a rude, incredulous way; she was hypnotised by the sight of men, of terrible men. I suppose I describe myself.

"Stay where you are," I said. "Don't worry. Rest. I will come and fetch you."

"Yes," she said. "I must rest. I'm half dead."

IT TOOK me no more than half an hour to drive to the town. She was in the white lounge. She was wearing a grey suit and was sitting slim and very upright, with a silk scarf round her long and beautiful throat, and she was wearing the foolish hat on her greying hair. She was looking severely amused but when she saw me she put all her vanity into a deep, laughing groan.

"My dear," she said in an exhausted voice when she took my hand. Her hand was small, nervous, and brittle, as if it would break.

"You're a saint. What is it that happens to me? I wreck everything. Why did I take that wrong road at Kidderminster. What *made* me?"

We were neither of us any longer young. Explanations were a game which gave us the illusion of youth and made our troubles and our past sparkle. We had grown up at the time when simplicity went out.

"You were trying not to come," I said.

That kind of remark delighted her. It pleased me too. We felt younger. A belief in fate was her form of hypocrisy.

"Have you had tea? If you have, let's go. I've got my car," I said.

"In two cars?" she said. "Don't be silly. You see what a muddle it is. We must talk."

"Not," I said, "with all these people. They are too interested. And why talk?"

"Look at them," she said. "I can't believe it."

We were sitting in a zoo. The lounge of the hotel smelled of white paint, of tea, new carpet, and roses, and there was a long beam of sunny blue cigarette smoke slanting between us and one of the sofas. Arranged in their armchairs were a number of what looked like dressed-up animals. There were giraffes, tigresses, monkeys, birds, dogs, and even a camel: they were middle-aged ladies, knitting or reading, and derisively interested in human nature, that is to say, Sophia and me. The only persons not listening to us had their backs to us. There was a man on the sofa beyond the beam of smoke with strong grey hair as thick as a schoolboy's. Near him sat a youth of sixteen wearing a school blazer and flannels. He wore spectacles. Of the man I could see only the sunburned neck and the shoulders of his tweed jacket. The youth was gazing at Sophia and turned his head, blushing, when I caught his look. He had a red note-book on his knee.

The man had a book, too. Suddenly he slapped it on his knee and said in a ringing and confident voice:

"We're absolutely stumped, old boy."

The zoo looked up from their knitting-needles.

"Ssh!" said Sophia to me. "Listen. It's fascinating. It's the man I told you about—the one in shorts who was staring at me."

"Umph!" said the boy in a voice that was far more elderly than the man's.

"He's a professor or something," Sophia

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said. "Anyway he knows a lot of women professors. He's on holiday. That is his son. They're on a bus tour. He was looking at me as if he knew me."

"You are not a woman professor," I said. "How d'you know all that?"

Sophia was annoyed by this; she seriously liked to be whatever was going, if a man were concerned.

"He's been telling us all. Listen," she said.

"That boy will know you again," I said.

Sophia stared back at the boy in a prim and amused way that crushed him once more.

The man cleared his throat and the boy said something to his father, obviously about us. The father spoke again. He was making a speech to the room. The pitch of his voice was exacting. It was the good-humoured voice of a humourless man, questing, inflected by a note that blended educated anxiety with the exhilaration which is shared by sea lions and great bores. It was a voice both specifically victimising and blandly generic. It was the voice of a university.

"The 26th," it said. "That's where we're sunk."

"No bus," the boy said.

"Let's have a look at your book again," said the father.

Sophia sighed.

There was a pile of guide books and timetables on the table beside the boy among the magazines. He handed the red note-book to his father.

"I don't see," said the father opening the book and turning the pages, "how we've slipped up. We've done exactly what we planned." He took a pencil and ticked pages of the book, item by item. "July 16th. Leave Trigorin 8.15, arrive Llandor 11.30, church, museum, sandwiches. Stay George and Dragon—all right?"

He ticked these items in the book.

"July 19th," he continued, "leave nine—what's this? I can't read your writing. You must learn to write figures in a clear, uneducated hand—ha ha! I can't tell whether this is a three or a five . . ."

"Five," said the boy. "We've done that."

"I know, I know," said the father. "But I like things right. We may want to look this up in years to come. Now, 9.5." He altered the figure. The boy looked towards us with shame.

"July 19th," said the father. "Leave Llandor, arrive Creep 11.20, visit castle, Query dungeon. Yes, we did the dungeon. Early lunch Globe, another castle, bus 2 o'clock to Bronwen, waterfall, tea, stay Crown . . ."

"That poor boy," I said.

"There's lots more, the whole holiday," said Sophia. "Day by day. Why poor? That's exactly what one ought to do."

"Well, his poor wife," I said. "I can't see you doing it."

"That's where you're wrong," Sophia said. And then: "She's not with them. She's dead."

The certainty of Sophia made me laugh.

"Obviously she's dead," she said, and there was that dry, seductive, low-spirited choke in her throat, that grimace of ironical horror, that small, practical, disposing movement of the chin which indicated that Sophia was facing a decisive and congenial interment.

Sophia's words made me look more closely at the man. I picked up a magazine and looked over the top of it. I stopped smiling. Now I knew why I had noticed a peculiar quality in his voice. It was not generic. It was specific. I knew him. His wife *had* died. She had died three years before. It was a man called Charles Chaucer. I whispered this to Sophia.

"Ssh!" she said. "Listen."

"I know him," I repeated. "It is Charles Chaucer."

Sophia paid no attention. She was listening to Chaucer who was still speaking.

RATHER than dismay, I felt laughter rise through my feet and grow inside my body, getting deeper and deeper until I was submerged in it. Sophia believed in Fate and so did I. But my notion was different from hers. Her belief enabled her to make a devious escape into a melancholy which permitted her to get out of anything she wanted

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to get out of. For me—I had only to look at Chaucer. Fate was the asinine. At forty-five I found my cheeks burning because the world's oldest joke was being played on me and, as always, at the time of crisis. To have met anyone, at this moment, would have been awkward. To meet Chaucer was farce.

For a little while I thought of quietly getting away. I studied the room. There was only one door, in the middle. I had come in by this door unseen for Chaucer would have sprung at once. There was no escape. I put down the magazine and stared at Chaucer's neck, daring him to look round.

Chaucer was farce because he was what is called my "oldest friend." I do not mean that he was a friend in any serious sense. His rôle in life was to be the oldest friend of everyone, the man who crops up in one's life on and off for twenty years and always at the unguarded moments. At Dieppe when one is sneaking out; at Dover when one is sneaking happily back. It is his knock at the door that stops the domestic quarrel, that interrupts the love affair or makes one put the pistol back in the drawer. Chaucer arrived in my life, every few years, like a clown or a conscience, innocently, creating guilt. His innocence lay in his efficiency in pursuing the single purpose of his life: "I like to keep in touch." The kiss is killed, the suicide misses his moment. Chaucer saves us.

"And you see what the 26th means," Chaucer was saying. "I can't believe that they don't run a bus every day—but here it is as plain as anything. Thursdays only. What a day to run a bus anyway. It's a real headache."

The boy murmured.

"The snag is," said Chaucer, "that it knocks Snowdon clean out."

He said this as if he had brought the whole mountain down on top of himself.

The idea of Snowdon, the highest mountain in England, being "knocked clean out," made several ladies in the lounge look with the *de haut en bas* expression of English unbelief. There were snobbish smiles but two ladies looked at Chaucer with sympathy. One of these was Sophia.

But there Snowdon rose implacably out of Chaucer's time-table, a mountain not subject to the climbing-boots of poets like the mountains of the Lake District, not fatal to clerks like Ben Nevis, but well clambered by lawyers, doctors, professors, and undergraduates, injuring its half-dozen, even killing its occasional woman school-teacher, every year, often in the headlines, sold to publicity. It rose out of Chaucer's time-table in the drifting Welsh rain, encircled by teams of cyclists, belted by motor coaches; the steep side falling into cones of scree, the sheep bleating like Wesleyan ministers on the gentler slopes, the farmers glowering at the tourists over the stone walls at the bottom, and the excursions from Manchester going up the long slope on foot or by the light railway to the café in the inevitable cloud at the summit. There they waited for the famous view, while the professional classes were roped on the chimney or the rock face. It stood there rather wet, very lordly, in its rock, hostile to Chaucer's passion for contact.

"We'll have to miss it," the boy said in a false voice.

The sympathetic lady and Sophia, too, looked sorry for the boy.

"Miss it!" cried the dogged Chaucer. "But we can't miss Snowdon."

"Suppose we make it Wednesday," said the boy.

"No good," said the father looking at the time-table. "The eleven-twenty misses the connection by a quarter of an hour."

"No co-operation," said the boy.

I changed my mind. This seemed the moment to slip out.

"Darling," I said, "let's go."

"All right," said Sophia with resignation.

"Unless, unless," said Chaucer, "Here's an idea. Wait. Let me think."

Sophia had moved and the boy now gasped as if he were about to miss the biggest chance of his life. Agitatedly he tried to attract his father's attention. In the silence of Chaucer's thinking I heard the boy mutter:

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"Dad! Dad! That's the woman in the Barclay case."

"Damn!" I said. "The boy reads the papers."

"Where?" said Sophia looking round the room. She was paying no attention to me.

"Just a moment," said Chaucer. "I think I've got it. We don't go to Canwer, we take the early bus." (I did not catch the name of the place.) "Look at the time-table."

The boy rummaged among the books but did not take his eyes off Sophia.

"We can't do that," said the boy.

"We can. We can," cried Chaucer. "Why go to the *top* of Snowdon? We can work it if we go half-way up. What's wrong with that? Snowdon, half-way," he declared. "That's the idea."

There was a sigh from the snobbish ladies. They were satisfied. The gentler ones saw the wish to protect Chaucer made irrelevant. Sophia, who had been rapt and ironical, made her grimace and was suddenly set in the gloom I feared in her. I squeezed her hand.

"What's the *good* of going to the top, old boy? What's the point?" said Chaucer. "It's no different from other mountains. You get much the same view half-way."

"O.K.," said the boy getting out his pencil.

Chaucer sat forward on the sofa, elated.

"The important thing in life is to ask the right questions," he said.

Sophia sat back and picked up the magazine and leaned towards me. Looking at the advertisement of a fur coat, she said,

"How right he is! I've been going to the top, going to the limit all my life. Why? It is just as good half-way. That's why I am such a mess. I mean—take the case. Why did I go on with it? Why didn't you stop me?"

"I tried to," I said. "But there's no stopping you, you know, once you're set. You're stubborn."

"I need someone to stop me," she said. "You know who that man is?"

"I have just been telling you. It's Chaucer."

"Don't be silly. I'm serious," she said. "It's my husband, to the life."

We were back where we had so often been before—to the sacredness of Sophia's divorce.

"Listen," I said. "I'm telling you. It's a man called Chaucer, a friend of mine. I know him. What do we do now?"

"Oh no!" she exclaimed, opening her handbag and getting out her mirror. "Why on earth didn't you tell me! Let's go and speak to him. What an extraordinary man you are."

At this the unmistakable voice of my oldest friend spoke out.

"The Barclay case? Why didn't you tell me? Where?"

Chaucer stood up and recognised me at once. His face was as pink as his neck. His blue eyes shone.

"How absolutely splendid," he cried.

We went to him at once; Sophia still had the magazine in her hand as I introduced her.

"Marvellous," said Chaucer. "This is my son."

Chaucer's face did not astonish me. It was young, it was sunburned to the neck. What astonished me was his clothes. Perhaps because of the mild youthfulness of his face, they seemed to overpower and astonish and magnify him. A stupendous tropical butterfly in tweed had broken out of the chrysalis of mourning. I had never seen this Chaucer before. Fresher and even younger after grief, he now wore a blatant black, red, and green jacket in wide check. A blue and white check open-necked shirt seemed to boil on his chest and a few chest hairs showed like a whiff of steam at the neck. His khaki shorts made his pink knees look wilful, like smooth supernumerary faces, tripling his powers of observation; the dark red stockings with the green scout tabs of the garters, added a Tyrolean friskiness. In his ordinary crisis get-up he had been a grey figure. Now he was sporting and as blatant as a poster. A wishing for publicity had been submerged in him.

"How d'you do?" he was saying to Sophia, holding her hand and turning to his son to say:

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"Janet Forth was here this afternoon, wasn't she, old boy? You remember?" (This to me.) "She was up at Newnham and went to the Foreign Office, until she left for Athens —the British school. Got a C.B.E.—did you know? You've only just missed her."

At least we had not been his first prey that day.

"Took a first in History," he went on to Sophia, at last releasing her hand. "Sit down," he said. "This is splendid."

We did not sit down.

"Trust C. C.," I said to Sophia, "to remember the learned ladies."

Chaucer laughed shyly and innocently, giving Sophia a look that searched her for her academic distinction. For Chaucer was Don Juan—but not the ordinary version of that character. He was the pursuer of academic women. To their persons and their sex he was indifferent; his lust and single-minded quest was for their intellectual particulars. Where had they been to school? To which university? In what year? With whom? When had they got their degrees? In what subjects? Had they taken a First or a Second? A large procession of educated women had given their academic all to Chaucer's amorous mind. Some had even become Dames. He sent blue-eyed glances at Sophia who suddenly became gay. What small academic jewel did she possess? An intermediate perhaps? A mere diploma? It was an academic undressing. I grinned. There was not a trace of intellect, beyond the usual socialite pickings, in Sophia. If she had graduated anywhere it was in the Courts—the Divorce Court and the Queen's Bench. Her only distinction was public scandal. Chaucer's son, standing back and unable to close his mouth, knew that. He was overcome.

In the meantime, Chaucer was eagerly telling us what we knew already.

"Snowdon," he said. "We've run into a spot of bother there. I thought of dropping in on Mary Cumberland. . . ."

He was off again on his quest. He gave me a knowing look as he drew once more on the notorious provender of his power to bore. Then, without warning, he said genially to Sophia:

"My son was just telling me he was sure he knew you. He saw your picture in the papers . . . the Barclay case."

I could not speak. The son could not speak. All the ladies in the room—the giraffe, the dogs, the tigresses, and the camel —put down their books and stared.

"I expect he did," Sophia said. "It was everywhere. Which one did you see?" She put this question to the boy.

She was delighted and proud and radiant; and there was a pout of reproach at my annoyed face. I was depriving her of the only gain the case had brought her: publicity.

"I got my damages," she said impudently with a now defiant look at me.

"I know. A farthing," said the boy, a mild votary of fact.

Sophia saw my fidgeting shame. She knew the damages were contemptuous and that the case had been a calamity to her reputation.

"Splendid!" Chaucer said to her in his eager, pointless way. She was even more pleased. She turned to look at the ladies in the lounge and for a long time I had not seen her eyes so brilliant or heard her answering voice so vivacious. For myself, my worst memories of the scene in court were re-enacted. I expected to hear the judge, who looked like some moralising old woman in a red bath-robe and curlers—I expected to hear the judge say again:

"You may think the defendant is a woman of evil mind. . . . On the other hand, you may think that Mrs. Barclay is not a woman for whom discretion means very much and that she has shown a general disposition to meddle and to make much of very little. You have seen her in the witness box. You may ask if she is to be relied upon. . . ."

And I could hear myself saying to Sophia before the action:

"Leave it alone. The woman is a spy. She has got her friends to watch you. People like that destroy themselves. Let them. It can't hurt you."

"Unelevating society . . . frivolous action

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. . . storm in a tea-cup . . . ill-advised ladies. . . ."

I could hear the judge going on. His voice melted into the voice of Chaucer who never dropped a piece of research.

"Who was the judge?" he said.

Sophia told him.

"He was up at Magdalen with me," said the ecstatic Chaucer, rumpling the rug at his feet.

SOPHIA liked a social titbit like that. She would have gone to the scaffold with pleasure if, on the way, she could have picked up a bit of gossip about the hangman. Her pleasure and Chaucer's were complete.

"Now tell me about your holiday," she said to the boy. "Let me see your marvellous book."

She rummaged among the magazines and soon had the table in disorder. She found his note-book.

"Ah, this is where you write it all down. What a good idea," she said. "You like to have everything planned."

The boy was ashamed.

"Dad does," said the boy.

"So do I," said Sophia.

I gaped at her.

"I wish I wrote everything down," she said. "You know where you are. There is nothing to worry about. You've got it all except for one day." She changed her lively manner and her argument. "Isn't it rather thrilling? Not knowing? I mean unless you'd planned all the others, this one wouldn't be so thrilling?"

The youth looked suspiciously at her.

"Now then you two," said Chaucer. "Sorry to break it up."

Chaucer's face was so sunburned, his son's face so pale, that he looked as if he had taken all the sunshine of their holiday for himself: now he was taking Sophia's kindness. I was relieved that it was he who was breaking up our meeting. I feared it would last for ever.

"En route," he said to his son. "Leave the books there. Five-thirty. We've just got time for the Castle. Let's meet later on at dinner."

I murmured something and they went.

"I hope not," I said to Sophia. She was looking for her magazine in the muddle she had made on the table. She picked it up.

"Now," I said. "I suppose that was all right."

"Let's sit down," she said. Her gaiety had gone. "I feel so low."

"Those clothes of his. That suit! I love you," I said.

We sat down where Chaucer had been sitting. The seat was warm with him still.

"What about his clothes?" said Sophia. "You men are sweet. Straighten the rug, my dear. Did you see him, how he drew the rug up between his feet when he was talking to us? I was fascinated. He had almost worked it up to his knees in a heap. Is he always confident like that?"

"I didn't notice," I said. "That wasn't confidence—it was nerves."

"I could not look at anything else," she said. "I can't bear men who stand still."

I straightened the rug.

"You did not tell me he was your oldest friend," she said.

"He isn't," I said. "But I've always known him."

I gave her my reflections on oldest friends. She did not laugh.

"How little I know about you," she said. "You don't really know me."

"We've known each other a long time," I said.

"A year," she said. "He's like my husband."

"Yes—you said. That was a bit of a shock, you know. Did *he* live on the examination papers of female dons?"

"Certainly not," said Sophia, flashing in defence of her husband. "Remember, I've been married. You have not."

"I'm glad for your sake."

"Why for mine."

"You might have been jealous," I said.

"Are you?" she said.

Sophia's husband had been a bond between us. His gratifying stupidity, his dullness, his baldness, his obstinacy had convinced me of my power over all the gossip

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about her. I had failed, of course, to stop her from going on with the silly slander action and I was put out by the scene with Chaucer which had shown me that unrepentantly she enjoyed the fight for its own sake and expected to be admired for it. What disturbed me was that Sophia's husband was an abstraction no longer. He was a real man. Possibly he wore a loud sports jacket and shorts and said things like "Absolutely splendid."

"DARLING," I said, "I did not come here to sit in this hotel but to take you home. We are going to be married."

"My dear," she said, drawing away, "we must talk."

"Talk," I said. "What for? What about? We've done all the talking. I said . . . marry."

She took my hand and squeezed it.

"I'm worn out," she said. "I'm so bewildered. I feel so numb."

"We shall be quiet and peaceful," I said.

"Peace; how I want it," she said.

"Look—I'll see about your car and we'll go home."

"I'm terribly sorry," she said. "This is not what I intended but I'm utterly whacked. I haven't slept for nights. And then Kidderminster. . . ."

"You've told me about Kidderminster! I'll go and see about the car."

"My dear," she said, "I can't. It wouldn't be fair."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll be better in the morning," she said hurriedly. "It's just the journey and we must talk."

"Talk?" I said with exasperation.

"I promise you, in the morning," she said. "I'm going to stay here tonight. I've got a room. I'm sorry."

"Sophia!"

She became very pale.

"I know," she said. "Forgive me."

"But I've got the cottage. You let me get the cottage ready." I was angry. "When did you get a room here?" I asked. "If you stay, I stay."

"Oh no, you can't do that," she said in a prudish fluster that I always found attractive. "It wouldn't do."

She looked nervously at the row of women in the room. "You mustn't."

"Darling," I said, "I love you. You've come all this way to love me."

"You did not come to London for me," she said.

"My dear! Your telegram," I said. "You told me not to."

"Did I? Do you always do as you are told? Darling, your face. It looks so tragic. Don't, please, look like that. I can't bear it. It's only women, my dear. Oh lord, I'm always doing this."

"Always?" I said sharply.

Her husband had become real. Now all the scandals became real also. The judge returned in his red bath-robe.

"Unreliable . . . frivolous. . . ." he was still saying.

She listlessly picked up her magazine and she looked at me.

"I'm telling you the truth," she said. "Do you think I tell you the truth, always?"

"Yes," I said. Afterwards, very often afterwards, puzzling about this question of hers, I remembered a movement of her lower lip when I answered. It was a movement of disappointment. She wanted me to say that I knew she was telling a lie. She badly wanted to be seen through, but despair had made me blind.

"I'm going to get the car," I said decisively, and getting up, I walked out of the lounge into the hall and asked for the name of the garage. I was not away for more than a quarter of an hour.

When I came back she had gone. She had left a message with the hall porter saying that she would ring me in the morning.

"Madame said she was feeling tired," said the porter in a voice of pious intimacy.

"Give me the telephone."

"There are no telephones in the rooms," he said with pride.

Sophia and I had certainly moved into a different world.

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THE man gave me her room number and, with disapproval, watched me walk up the shabby stairs. Her room was number eight on the first floor. I went up and crossed a landing which contained the largest case of stuffed seabirds I had ever seen. It gave a dead marine odour to the passage. I knocked. The door opened and there stood Chaucer.

"Splendid man!" cried Chaucer. "Come in. We're just back. Where's Mrs. Barclay? Let's all go and have a drink."

I looked at the number of the door. It was 18. The one had been badly defaced.

"She's gone to bed very tired," I had the resource to say. "I'm just going home."

Chaucer gave me a sly look that only the professional oldest friend can give. He knows the world is full of happenings he can only be on the edge of. He conveys: "Between us it is unnecessary to say anything, but I think you are being very unwise."

"She's in number eight," he said enthusiastically. "I looked it up, if you want her."

"No no. I'm just going home," I repeated.

"Well then, one for the road. You must," he said.

He marched me down the stairs.

"There's meeting you to celebrate," he said at the bar. "So many years. . . ." he said. "Not," he said with a killing, blue-eyed glance, "since Dieppe."

It was a sharp blow. Whatever else he was, Chaucer was a professional and efficient. I had been running off with a schoolteacher in those days. He had met us on the boat going over. He and she had had a most satisfying talk about the year she had taken her diploma.

There was a change in Chaucer's conversation now we were at the bar. Academic research vanished. He was blatant.

"Interesting case the Barclay case," he said. "Why did she do it?"

I headed him off. He was on at once to libel and slander. I headed him off again on to his holiday, but the taste for crime and law was growing fast in him. It was a new interest suddenly born. They had passed (he said) the mill at Duffin, the scene of the Purdom murder.

"The farmer's wife who poisoned her husband," he explained. There was a don at Queens' or somewhere who had been disqualified from driving. He had only once been to the Law Courts in his life, Chaucer said—and he gleamed with the intention of never missing a case now—and that was to hear an appeal. The appellant was the member of a gang of safe-breakers.

"It just shows you what a small place the world is. The man sitting next to me in court knew the prisoner. 'Pal of mine. Pal of mine,' he kept saying." Chaucer was enjoying himself. He looked younger and younger with every crime he mentioned.

He had actually been sitting next to somebody else's oldest friend. Chaucer's son had joined us now and suddenly blurted out:

"I don't think that woman doctor will get off, do you?"

"The husband of your chemistry mistress is a Q.C., isn't he?" Chaucer asked proudly of his son. Chaucer's age dropped to the early thirties.

Chaucer insisted on seeing me off to the door of my car. I was obliged to drive off. I drove out of the town to the bridge over the river and looked at the mild evening water where one or two men were fishing.... I waited for the moment when Chaucer and his son would be safely at dinner before I returned.

In an hour I was in Sophia's room. She was lying in bed.

"Didn't you get my message?" she said.

"You can't ring me. No telephone," I said.

"Silly," she said. "Come for me in the morning, early."

"About eleven," I said, knowing her habits.

"Earlier," she said.

"Ten-thirty," I laughed.

"No, ten," she said.

This was an old game of ours and it soothed me. I was restored.

"Ring me from the call box," she said, "I'll come down."

When I got back to the cottage and saw its white solitary walls in the July moon-

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night, I saw she had been playing with me. Up and downstairs to the telephone she would go, yes; but she had been too "low" to come here. One gets jealous of ridiculous things. She would do anything for a telephone. I had a bad night and to teach her I waited until eleven o'clock before I drove back those ten miles to the hotel.

The porter was standing outside his desk as if waiting for me.

"Mrs. Barclay," he sneered, even before I asked him, "has gone. She went out at half-past nine. There's a note for you."

I took the letter and went out into the street to read it. I was not going to allow the porter to gaze at my destruction from the whited sepulchre of his old age. I was back instantly. Sophia said she had by mistake picked up Chaucer's little red exercise book, the bible of his journey, the chart of his life, with her magazine, and had only found it this morning. She had gone after him with it.

"I'm death," she said.

The Chaucers had left by bus an hour earlier and no one knew where. On the wall of the office was the calendar. The figures 26 stood out large.

WHEN I look back at this period of Sophia Barclay's life and my own the fatal difference between us is clear. I had no unconscious mind; Sophia had no conscious mind. When I waited at the hotel for her to ring up or to come back, listening to the combustion of the summer traffic passing to the holiday mountains, I had leisure to go through her character inch by inch. It is a delusion that distance or waiting breed mystery and encourage desire. At the end of an hour there was little of Sophia's character left. I knew that when she returned I would start putting it together again and the knowledge made me laugh. I was laughing at Chaucer. Sophia had really brought off her most brilliant coup. To take away the planner's plan, to make away with the policy of the most insured man on earth—it was dazzling of her. I imagined the moment of discovery, the recriminations between father and son. Chaucer would be defeated. Without his book he would not know whether he was to eat a sandwich or have the hotel lunch anywhere. He would be faced by a waterfall when he had expected a castle. It would be anarchy. For the first time he would be out of touch. Unless—and I laughed even more when I imagined Sophia saying this to him as she certainly would—his unconscious had been at work. For what phenomenal motive, in obedience to what fatal intimation, had he left the 26th blank?

On that decisive morning in our lives Sophia was true to herself. She had as little idea of where she was as she had of the whereabouts of the Chaucers. Her inevitable telephone calls conveyed this. I damned his little red book. She called me intolerant.

"I must put this right. It's frightful of me. It is not as if they were friends," she said.

And the next call:

"Still no luck. They must have gone on to Snowdon."

"But that's a terrible long way. Come back."

"I can't wreck their holiday," she said.

"What about us?" I said. "Are you running off with me or Chaucer *père et fils*?"

"Speaking French does not make it funny," she said. "People are serious," she added censoriously.

"Not Chaucer," I said.

"His wife is dead," she said. "He's a widower."

Like divorce, death brought out all Sophia's profound feeling for the respectable. I was made to feel outside the pale of the great central glooms of life.

"What has that to do with it?" I said.

I found out where she was.

"I'm coming for you," I said.

"Two cars again. Don't be silly," she said. "I'm going to Snowdon."

"So am I then," I said. "I can't wait wondering what all this chasing after widowers is about."

Her voice changed.

"All what?" she said very coldly.

"This," I said.

I recognised as I drove after her that what

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I had just said was disastrously wrong. I recognise after five years, that it was one of those unforgivable mistakes one makes in one's life. Sophia was always doing the wrong thing but to call it "all this" was to make her feel in the right about it. I had once called the Barclay case "all this." I spent the rest of the journey trying not to see the ludicrous side of our situation; the Chaucers voyaging without chart, Sophia pursuing them without knowing where they were and myself pursuing her, and all of us not meeting at the mountain sacred to Welsh tourism. I was wrong.

The first thing I saw at that point of the mountain where the light railway starts for the summit was Sophia's small green car. Near it stood Chaucer's son. Round-shouldered, thin, pale, glum, he was staring enviously at the heavy motor traffic on the road.

I got out of my car. "Where are you all?" I asked.

He watched a motor cycle go roaring by and out of sight before he could collect himself to answer. He was deeply enjoying noise.

"Hullo," he said passively. "Dad's with Mrs. Barclay. They told me to wait here in case you came."

"Where are they?"

"Gone up," he said, nodding to the mountain. "Dad's taken her. We were in a mess. Dad couldn't find our book. She had taken it. We missed two buses."

He spoke in the relieved manner of one who was grateful that his father had missed something for once.

"If Mrs. Barclay hadn't found it and brought it we wouldn't have got here. She was very decent, she gave us a lift—that little Humber can shift when she steps on it."

But I was looking up the green slopes and hard shoulders of the mountain. I was listening for her chatter.

"You won't see them," he said.

"I'm sorry I've made you miss the trip. Why didn't you go?"

"Doesn't interest me," said the boy. "My idea was to take the motor bike to France. They didn't want me."

"How long have they gone?"

"I don't know. They're going right up to the top though. When she gave us a lift that is what she said: 'Now we can all go right up to the top.' Dad and I were only going half-way. You see, she said she'd give us a lift on afterwards. She said she'd never been to the top of a mountain before in her life."

The boy was grinning but he stopped shyly and frowned at me thoughtfully. Then he burst out:

"Do you think she got a fair deal in that case? She was telling Dad about it, he knows the judge. He said she ought to have got a thousand pounds. The woman doctor has in the paper this morning. Do you think the law's always right? I've never met anyone who's been in a case before. There was trouble about a water burst in Dad's office and Mother wanted him to bring a case, but he wouldn't, so we didn't get anything. I agree with Mrs. Barclay, you've got to go all out."

All out with Chaucer!

Many hours passed before they came down the mountain. Sophia was hot and blushed when she saw me. I had hardly ever seen her look so impudent. At half-past six that evening I was following them as she drove them a few miles on to their next stopping place and, as usual, she was soon out of sight. When I caught them up she had collided with the bus from Llanberis. They spent the night of the 26th in hospital. It was the beginning of their courtship.

I DINE with the Chaucers from time to time: he never loses touch with old friends. He looks at her with pride; she is his disaster, his news item. Entered no doubt in his little red book she is plump and safe. He does not often talk about academic women now but at dinner the talk often turns to judges, courts, points of law. He likes to talk about his marriage.

"She nearly killed me," he says to his guests, pointing down the table at her. "Stole my papers and nearly killed me, didn't you?

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I could have brought a case. And there's an interesting point. The insurance company fought. It was an unusual case. There was some point of law.

"It's the only time my picture has been in the papers," he said once in my hearing.

They were two news items; publicity had been Chaucer's craving; scandal, too.

"Or mine," said Sophia.

"Oh no, that's not true," protested Chaucer with pride on her behalf. "The Barclay case—tell them about it."

I changed the subject.

"No, you," she said.

"It is your story," he said. "But still if you won't I must——"

"And don't forget the book," she said.

"Oh yes, I always keep a book. . . ." he began.

She smiled at him, secure, satisfied, fulfilled, and as he told the tale he looked at me slyly, protectively. She is the scandal (he conveys) that I could never have managed. I am the scandal he has saved her from.

Icarus

That dark patch on the rock was the shadow
Of wings. It swung to the terraced fields,
To the leaning maize and poppies. It climbed
The white-washed wall, the line of cypress trees,
And swerved to the cold headlands,
Where the North wind hangs his mask.

But the dark shape returned. It circled
The paved yard of my house, rolled round the stucco
Cupids of the porch, windscratched, unable to fly,
And flashed through the latched iron gate.
There was no summer in the reeds of the beach,
And no wistaria in my garden. Only the skeletons
Of trees and ageing hands.

Naked bent the steep sky, silent.
Was it a light-legged winter cloud? A wounded
Bird? But that arched shadow reared the heart
To light, to the wide streams of the wind
And the savage liberty of height.

I did not hear the cry, nor the splash.
I did not see the waxen tears. Only the shadow
Of wings moving across the landscape,
Hollow footfalls of those we loved,
Who passed so strangely beyond our life—
Grooves of yesterday's wind.

C. A. Trypanis

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Kathleen Nott

The Misery of Philosophy

THAT philosophers tend to be miseries might be one cause of the *misère de la philosophie* complained of by Marx. Critical philosophy, which is the dominant kind of modern Western academic philosophy, is disappointing not only to laymen but, one suspects, to philosophers themselves: for it is reasonable to assume that the kind of expectations which lead laymen to propound uneasy general questions also lured the philosopher, at least in his early days. But modern philosophy seems to have moved steadily into a state where it has sold out of answers and the philosopher kicks his heels in an empty shop and says something philosophically equivalent to "Didn't you know there's a war on?"

The expectations are still there. The layman may be cowed by those schools which tell him his metaphysical questions are meaningless, but he will not permanently believe that his intramundane questions, those which come to him willy-nilly in the course of life and refer, for example, to art and value, are, just because they do not admit of one precise and certain answer, without sense.

From the time of Descartes, European philosophy became increasingly preoccupied with epistemology, with what can be known certainly in a precise intellectual formulation. The question whether what can be known in this way, if anything, is worth knowing (useful to know) or even interesting, has been increasingly set aside.

We have come to accept this as a natural and inevitable development. Whether it was really so or not seems now to be worth asking. It is possible that this branch of philosophy has been accorded rather more respect than it deserves because it seems to be objective: it has acquired, too, an emotional cachet of the sort that is accorded to arduous search which looks as if it will be unrewarded. The implicit question raised by Descartes, "What can I certainly know?" precipitated all the other questions about the nature of exact knowledge, and was reformulated in our own time as "Can I be *said* to know anything certainly?"—a question by this time expecting and receiving the answer "No." In doubting everything, Descartes was, by elimination, seeking exact certainty. In so doing he launched European philosophy on a hopeless quest. What the logical analytical schools rightly proclaimed was that the standard of exact certainty, of truth, was scientific, depended on the organisation of activities which could be exactly repeated but which could not be finally described in a verbal language. This development of philosophy looks logical and coherent, and in terms of its professed aim it is so. But perhaps the quest for certainty was misleading; perhaps truth, in this sense, was never the natural or inevitable philosophical goal. If the philosopher had not been deflected from his natural and more nearly spontaneous pursuits by an attempt to compete with science on its own ground, he might not have reached the

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present lamentable case in which he is driven to despise or neglect what always used to be his other normal functions.

THERE is no sense in denying that the physical and mathematical sciences did provide us with exact standards of truth, of verification in the sense of control and prediction. The question I wish to ask is whether or not they did not also provide the philosopher, not through their fault, but through his emulation, with a kind of inferiority complex which led to an abnormal deflection of his *interest*. He became preoccupied with proof and certainty and progressively ignored the fact that both individually and historically it had been other inducements which started him philosophising. And the obsessive interest in a negative certainty still goes on. The quest, though hopeless, has not really been given up, and hence has acquired the emotional tone appropriate to masochistic adventures—a certain loftiness which always comes from the pursuit of absolutes, however disguised, counterbalanced by a certain contempt for other activities of the mind which cannot be related to this disguised absolute of precise and final definition. Truth, like Goodness and Beauty, is a word which causes a certain tingling in some noses.

That this loftiness is not always or immediately visible does not mean that it is not there. However oven-dried he believed his philosophy to be, we can see this emotional colouring even in Wittgenstein. The famous "Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent," which ends the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, sounds like a noble acquiescence in a harsh but inevitable fate: and the St. George attitude, the wish to make an end of philosophy as if it were something which had got loose and were laying everything waste, is marked: which seems to be a secondary characteristic of all critical philosophy.

In A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*, the emotional attitude both in its positive and negative aspects is even more obvious. Positively there is a Uriah Heepish attitude towards science, and negatively there is a contemptuous attitude towards the æsthetic and moral activities of the mind. The language of natural science, according to Professor Ayer, is the model, and the function of philosophers is to elucidate the symbols it uses, or to be linguistic lab-boys. This seems to be an example of rationalising a feeling that one isn't really wanted or useful, into exaggerated or fussy helpfulness. Professor Ayer says, "It might be thought that the philosophical elucidation of scientific theories . . . could not be of much benefit to the scientists themselves. But this would be a mistake. One has only to consider the importance to contemporary physics of Einstein's definition of simultaneity, in order to realise how necessary it is for the experimental physicist to be furnished with clear and definite analyses of the concepts which he uses." But didn't Einstein work that out for himself without benefit of philosophy? Does not this show that Professor Ayer misconceives the nature of scientific language? Surely the activities of science, its practical investigations, engender a language, mathematical or otherwise, which is intended to give precise instruction in further activities of confirmation or control? It looks as though Professor Ayer thinks that working scientists have to wait to see what some philosophy of science says, in order to know what they mean.

The negative aspect of Professor Ayer's emotional attitude is a certain impatience or contempt with poetry and art which is comparable with the patronising attitude of Hobbes, of Bishop Sprat, and of certain other founder members of the Royal Society. It is worth noting that it is mostly philosophers who make odious comparisons between scientific and poetic language. This suggests that both scientists and poets may have a better grasp of the technical nature of communication. The logical positivists have at least been part of a general movement which has developed a useful pruning-tool. But the exclusiveness of their definition of meaning (although tempered by vagueness after the second edition of *Language, Truth and Logic*) is relevant here because it reflects

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the characteristic post-Cartesian philosophical attitude. Nothing, surely, but an anxious preference for the indubitableness of mathematical and analytical assertion and for the apparent sense-solidities and regularities with which natural scientists concern themselves, could account for the attempt to drive poetry and ethics out of the world of meaning into the void of metaphysics.

Ayer's views on æsthetics and ethics are now appearing as the dead end which in fact they are. And, for instance, Professor I. A. Richards who at one time accepted the extreme opposition between scientific and poetic statement, classing poetic and ethical statement with the emotive, and the emotive with the non-meaningful, in his most recent work attributes both meaning and value to poetry. He even seems to be on the brink of awarding a higher status to poetry than to science: "Let us not suppose too lightly," he says, "that the business of distinguishing and relating poetry and science belongs to science."

WHAT was strange and, for the purposes of this discussion, significant, was Ayer's persistent use of the highly polemic word, *Nonsense*, as classifying the æsthetic and ethical uses of language. This word not only caused an emotive stir—at some level of consciousness it must have been intended to do so; for no one except possibly another logical positivist can accept Ayer's view that the language of propositions, provided that they are true and important, is indifferent.

To identify meaning with the possibility of proof as Ayer has done, is an error as to the nature of all language. A language is really a language, has meaning, in so far as it attempts to communicate. What is the test that communication has been established? Most commonly a complete circuit, a kind of semaphore back. This may be a substantial repetition or an activity (including a scientific experiment) which satisfies the party of the first part—"satisfy" here might also mean "give him what he's asked for," for instance a bang on the nose when he has been abusive. The chief difference in the "meaning" of poetry is that distance and time may be too great for the semaphore back: and the activities which may be generated cannot ever be completely predicted or prescribed. But neither scientific nor artistic "meaning" is primarily concerned with proof. Or rather the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The onus is not on the initiator but on the receiver. The purpose of language is not to be perfectly exact, not to fit its object like a glove. It is to initiate activities. (It is worth noting that the later Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigators*, was much concerned with the use of language and with the "forms of life," which presumably include the spontaneous and necessary activities of men.)

That philosophers should have deviated so far from simple obviousness and natural interest is what needs accounting for. We are frequently told that after the rise of scientific humanism in the 17th century, philosophers forgot God and became too anthropocentric. This is untrue. Far from forgetting God, most of the important philosophers—including Descartes and Kant—brought him back to a position where, like the monarchy, he was above party disputes and propaganda. What the philosophers forgot was Man; they became insufficiently anthropocentric. And questions which involved the nature of Man and which reflected his natural and spontaneous interest, as well as what he actually needed to know in order to live in an interesting and creditable fashion, became neglected or despised by the most influential or the most vocal philosophers. This is the real split between intellect and feeling: it must reflect an emotional attitude; and the extreme identification of meaning and proof which is a search for an impossible certainty, is one of its symptoms.

PROFESSOR John Wisdom has given this question of the subjectivity of philosophy an unusually serious if not altogether earnest consideration. In an essay with the interesting title *Philosophy, Anxiety and Novelty*, he says "What is philosophy?" means

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"What is a philosopher?" The anxiety to which he refers in this essay is mainly of the intellectual sort which can be popularly expressed by beginning "I am anxious to know——." But in other papers he shows that he is as well aware of the solar plexus as D. H. Lawrence was: and a paper called *Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis* begins about Wittgenstein who said that he philosophised to remove "a feeling of puzzlement, to cure a sort of mental cramp." Continuing with an entertaining and teasing comparison between the doubts of an obsessional neurotic (*Did I really turn off the gas?*) and those of a professional philosopher (*I'm not sure there's a table here*), he seems to make it all right by saying, "There is a big difference between the philosopher and both the psychotic and the obsessional neurotic": and then brings us up sharply by adding, "It lies in the flow of justificatory talk or rationalisation which the philosopher produces when asked why he takes the extraordinary line he does."

Elsewhere in the same paper he says, "No philosopher becomes really a Sceptic: because if a man really feels what the Sceptic says he feels then he is said to have 'a sense of unreality' and is removed to a home. In fact, the sceptical philosopher never succeeds in killing his primitive credulities which, as Hume says, reassert themselves the moment he takes up the affairs of life and ceases to murmur the incantations which generate his philosophic doubts."

Professor Wisdom is at least partly in jest and it would be a pity to labour what is meant in the main as a stimulating and lighthearted method of presentment. But he shows that "philosophising is a queer habit," anyway epistemological philosophising, and at least suggests that it has become queerer.

The Cartesian doubt of the external world is visible in all subsequent philosophies, and is evinced by the preoccupation with system and proof. Descartes left a gap between the philosopher and his world which was unbridgeable except by intellectual process. One might say that a modern philosopher is just that sort of person who has that sort of doubt (whatever bluff exterior he puts on), and sets out to cure it by seeking certitude and proof (even the melancholy certitude that you can prove nothing). Descartes, Berkeley, and others made God the guarantor of a reality other than the thinking Self: and this is the solution which people who hanker after a purely logical description of reality are driven to, surprisingly often. Hume, it is to be noted, hung his nose over the void and drew it sharply back, reverting, as he advised other epistemological philosophers to do, to "some lively impression of the senses." In late adolescence he developed a neurosis but was able to cure himself by a more active life and to take up his philosophical studies when he felt more mature. But he wanted to be the Newton of a science of human nature. Even he felt the fascination of system-making and the itch to rival the regularity and objectivity of science. But he remained aware that there was another life which demanded to be lived and understood.

The way that European philosophy developed looked, as I have said, logical and inevitable: but we should not confuse what has happened with what had to happen: if there were really such a thing as historical necessity, we should be much better at foretelling the future. And to understand the course of European philosophy we should need to know much more than we do about the obscurer human motives. Preoccupation with system-making and with certainty or proof at least reflects an obsession. A system, too, is a side of ideas and leads to battle and the attempted overthrow of another side of ideas: while, if you are trying to prove something, you have to argue, and also to develop a strategy of argument, a process which always throws up smoke-screens and obscures the clear light of objective truth. We can also say that these polemic processes lead straight to chairs of philosophy, which have to be held against all-comers. For a university is the proper camp of all scholasticisms: one eye, the sounder perhaps, is fixed on the examiner, and the other, and more astigmatic, on all the pre-existent works, here readily accessible, which have to be studied with intent to refute. Perhaps the most sig-

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nificant symptom (and it might also be fatal) of the disease of philosophy is that it has become completely academic and professional or indeed professorial.

WHAT is the cure, if any? I do not think it will be found within the walls of any university. What is required is that the amateur should come into his own again and rejoice in his status. This statement requires amplification. The amateur, or at least the anti-professorial need, is at least partially realised by both the other leading European philosophical developments: Marxism and Existentialism. But both of these create their own metaphysical entities and, given the chance, would probably browbeat the rest of us into adhering to them. The dialectic of Marxism is not designed only to exhibit natural contradictions; it moves inexorably to a foregone conclusion, as a tram to the terminus. And the Existentialism of Sartre, when he is being academic, bludgeons us with Teutonic systematising. On the other hand, in his novels and plays, he puts his philosophy across with literary grace. That perhaps may give us the clue. It is an abominable innovation that literary skill is unnecessary or even a kind of minor crime in a philosopher. We may have acquired the idea from Teutonic philosophers who couldn't write and whose native language was a natural impediment. But other distinguished philosophers, including Berkeley and Hume, have thought otherwise: and they were not thinking of "grace" or "embellishment" as Bishop Sprat and Professor Ayer would do, but of that precision which is a prime literary quality. In answer to the charge of being "rhetorical" or "emotive," Professor Wisdom has excellently described how we can try to "alter attitudes by rational persuasion," which is a discriminative process even if it would be called, in the old sense, rhetoric.

It is not insignificant that the dialogue form was favoured in earlier philosophy. Questions and answers which spring out of the activities of living require both a dramatic and an inconclusive expression. Amateurs might take heart from this and help to unify the language again. A philosophic advance may now be expected to come rather from the literary and creative side than from the scientific. Philosophy in fact must become again what it used to be, an art, giving up the attempt to be what it cannot be, a science. The linguistic schools have shown what language won't do. The amateur philosophic attempt should now be to show what it can and will do. The goal of philosophy is not truth but value: the discussion of what is really valued by or useful to men, and how and why.

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John Strachey

The Indian Alternative

THAT mighty pundit amongst columnists, Mr. Walter Lippmann, recently ended one of his pronouncements as follows:

> . . . we can best appreciate the crucial importance to the future of mankind of what Nehru is doing in India. It is to demonstrate that there is a humane and liberal alternative to the Stalinist way of developing a backward country. But for Nehru's India, backward countries would have no practical alternative model but that provided for them by Soviet Russia and Red China. It is that Nehru, far from being a stooge of Communism, is the most formidable rival in Asia, indeed the only rival in Asia, of Kruschev and Mao Tse-Tung. (*Manchester Guardian*, Monday, July 2nd, 1956.)

The British traveller, returning from the Indian Union today, is inclined to greet such a statement with the comment that, after all, the pundits are not always wrong.

In the first part of this year, I accepted an invitation from a body called the Indian Statistical Institute to visit India for a period of about two months, and I was there during March and April. The Indian Statistical Institute is a remarkable body, of what can perhaps best be called a para-governmental type. It is, in origin, a private venture, evolved by Professor Mahalanobis of Calcutta, but now operating on a pretty considerable scale throughout the sub-continent, and financed by substantial grants of Government money.

Professor Mahalanobis is himself an intriguing figure. A distinguished mathematical physicist of Cambridge, England, an F.R.S., an ardent Bengali Nationalist, an intimate of the Tagore circles, he is, today, often portrayed as a rather sinister sort of left-wing *eminence grise* of Indian politics. As a matter of fact, there is nothing very *grise* about him. He is a colourful, energetic, driving figure; but it is true that he has become a fairly left-wing Socialist. He has come to the conclusion that India must be industrialised, and that this can only be done in a socialist way. He visits Russia and China almost as frequently as he visits Western Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and he has a great respect for Russian industrial development, which he has studied statistically at first hand.

All this, of course, has opened him to the accusation of being a fellow-traveller, or even a disguised Communist. I believe this accusation to be without foundation. He is a friend and admirer of Nehru's, and he sincerely hopes and believes that India can go through her period of primary industrialisation while retaining her present highly developed democratic institutions. Nevertheless—and here Professor Mahalanobis is typical of his type of Indian intellectual—it is quite true that he has a strikingly different attitude towards Russia and China from that of any Western intellectual who is not, at least, a fellow-traveller.

We must face the fact that Russia and China excite far more admiration and far less repulsion in Asia than they do with us. This may be very wrong of the Indian and Asian

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intellectuals, but it is a fact; and we shall do ourselves nothing but harm if we go about calling those Asian intellectuals Communists, because they have this attitude to Russia and China.

Professor Mahalanobis invites a mixed bag of economists, and politicians who, like myself, have strongly economic interests, to visit his Institute in particular and India in general, each year. For example, this year I found myself in the company of Professor John Kenneth Galbraith of Harvard, Nicholas Kaldor of King's College, Cambridge, Frank Yates of the Rothamsted Agricultural Experimental Station, from the West, and Dr. Oskar Lange of Poland and Professor Bettelheim of the Sorbonne from the East. (I place Professor Bettelheim in the Eastern camp politically, if not geographically.) It is, in itself, a stirring experience to be one of the inmates of what has been irreverently called the resultant "Mahalanobis zoo." The Indian Institute of Statistics is one of the few places in the world in which persons of pro- and anti-Communist views can freely meet and argue.

THE Indian situation has so many facets, is so complex and is developing so swiftly that it is exceedingly difficult to convey an impression of it within a reasonable space. Perhaps the most convenient course will be to set down with the utmost baldness, five conclusions at which I did, as a matter of fact, arrive. Let me say, at once, that I am acutely aware that these conclusions cannot have been more than guesses, and that every-one of them may be an error. Nevertheless, if they serve to awaken the reader's interest in contemporary Indian development, they will not have been set down in vain. They are the following:

(i) India is now fairly launched on a process of basic industrialisation.

(ii) In, say, fifteen years' time, India will have become, in one way or another, an industrialised nation.

(iii) India will by then have also become a predominantly socialist community, in the sense that her major industries will be publicly owned.

(iv) The real question at issue is not whether India will be industrialised, nor even whether industrialisation will take a predominantly socialist form, but whether she can preserve her present genuinely democratic institutions and climate of opinion during this double process of industrialisation and socialisation.

(v) In other words, the consequences of a failure or breakdown in the present Second Five Year Plan would be by no means a return to private enterprise capitalism, but a transformation of India into some form of totalitarian or dictatorial community, presumably of a Communist character.

The great controversy in India today is as to whether the current "Second Five Year Plan," which was inaugurated on April 1st, 1956, is too large or too small, too "heavy" or too "light." (The whole political spectrum of opinion from Right to Left is in India predominantly, though not exclusively, contained within the governing Congress Party.) The further to the Left you go, the more the Plan is criticised for being too small and for allowing light industry, consumer goods, etc., to absorb too many resources; for failing to concentrate enough upon heavy industry. Conversely, the further to the Right you go, the more the Plan is criticised for being too big, for attempting to invest too much in heavy industry, while neglecting light industry, consumer goods, and transportation. (In particular, there is a controversy as to the amount of resources which should be devoted to railway development; some fifth of the total investment is being given to the railways, but it is claimed that this is not enough.) In fact, the Plan appears to be emerging as a slightly watered down version of the original draft "plan frame" prepared by my host Professor Mahalanobis and his "Indian Statistical Institute." (It was this draft or "plan frame" which, when it appeared over a year ago, was considered so radical.) I do not know that figures have much meaning at this stage, as they are being changed and will be changed

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fairly frequently, but I may quote just two orders of magnitude. At present it is proposed to invest over the next five years some 4,800 crores of rupees (£4,000M, though for convenience, I find that many economists translate R4,800 crores as £4,800M, as they regard the rupee at the moment as slightly undervalued.) Again, many economists seem to consider that India will need, in order to carry out the Plan, a minimum of some £120M a year in foreign exchange.

I do not propose to give here even the main proportions between the various objects of investment, because they are, again, sure to be varied several times, and in any case would not mean much. Suffice it to say that the main concentration in the Plan, as it has now emerged, is on heavy industry (steel, heavy electricals, coal, machine tools, power, etc.). Second comes agricultural development. Third, transportation. At the other end of the economic spectrum there is a relative neglect of light, consumer industries as such, but a fairly marked emphasis upon cottage handicrafts, including hand-spinning and weaving in the Ghandiist tradition.

MUCH conservative criticism has been levelled at the fact that the Minister of Finance can at present see his way to raising no more than some half of the total money needed for the Plan. In other words, something like half of the effort is to be covered by deficit financing in one form or another. No one would underestimate the risks of inflation which this situation implies. In physical terms it means that only one half of the labour and other resources needed for the Plan are to be diverted from other uses, while the other half must be found from resources at present unused. In terms of labour there is, no doubt, a justification for this, on orthodox Keynsian reasoning, since India possesses only too much unused labour. But this may not prove by any means so true of raw materials, imported equipment, special skills and other resources, the supply of which cannot, quickly at any rate, be increased by means of diverting additional labour to their procurement. Therefore the danger of serious inflation developing is real. Nevertheless, I think that it is true to say that the men whose judgment seemed to me coolest and best were less perturbed by this prospect than might have been supposed. In particular, the then Finance Minister, Mr. Deshmukh, though well aware, of course, of the gravity of his problems, was not, I found, disposed to urge a reduction in the scale of the Plan. (Deshmukh's recent resignation on the states boundaries issue, which has nothing to do with finance or economics, is a great pity.) He seemed well seized of the view that the risks of doing too little and going too slow might be even greater than the risks of doing too much and going too fast. Professor Galbraith of Harvard, with whom, I repeat, I spent much time in India, also took, on the whole, this view. Mr. Kaldor, who was advising the Indian Government on methods of taxation was, of course, extremely anxious that the Indian Government should increase its revenue by new fiscal devices. But he, too, wished that this should be done precisely in order that the size and scope of the Plan should not have to be reduced, and yet serious inflation be avoided. In fact the success or failure of the Plan depends, in my view, even more upon success or failure in another field, namely agricultural development, than upon fiscal policy.

THERE was a concensus of informed opinion from extreme Right to extreme Left that the successful and rapid development of agriculture is, in fact, the key not only to the avoidance of inflation, but also to India's whole future. Mr. Deshmukh defined his problem to me as fundamentally one of (a) increasing the productivity of Indian agriculture and (b) extracting from the countryside a share of the increased product in order to feed the additional millions of workers who are to be put on to capital formation in all its forms. He took the view that, at present, the Indian Government was taking from the peasant only some 2½ per cent of their product, while China was taking between 10 per cent and 15 per cent.

Fortunately, it is precisely in the sphere of

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agriculture that the present Indian effort seemed to me to be the most impressive. This was not so much in respect of the well-known and often described "Community Projects." I saw several of these and the best of them are admirable; but I could not help feeling that they were, in some respects at least, a little bit too good to be true. It seemed impossible to believe that a really significant proportion of the 560,000 Indian villages could possibly be covered by these remarkable, many-sided, highly staffed, highly idealistic and philanthropic projects, in which agricultural improvement is coupled with school building, road building, every kind of co-operative enterprise, the development of rural industries, hand-spinning and hand-loom weaving, etc.

Of greater economic importance, it seemed to me, was the National Extension Service. The initiation of the National Extension Service seemed to me incomparably the most valuable thing which American technical know-how and social idealism had given to India. The Indian Service is modelled quite closely, considering the wide difference of conditions, on the great American Agricultural Extension Service. The Indian N.E.S. is an attempt to cover the whole face of India with an agricultural service which will provide the peasants with artificial fertilisers, improved seeds, improved hand agricultural implements, and, in many cases, improved irrigation, and, above all, teach the peasants how to use these improvements as they become available. It is proposed, under the Plan, to cover the whole of India with this service by the end of the Second Five Year Plan.

Whether or not this can be accomplished, remains, of course, to be seen; but already in many parts of India which I visited, the N.E.S. is very much in evidence. In villages which I passed through quite by chance, on sight-seeing expeditions to the Ajunta caves and to other national monuments, etc., etc., the buildings and trucks and general activities of the N.E.S. were present, not of course in all villages, but already in a significant number.

The best authorities, from Professor Arthur Lewis (see his *Theory of Economic Growth*) to Professor Galbraith, who has an intimate knowledge of the American Agricultural Extension Service, all seem to agree that, in favourable conditions, such a service as this can have startling consequences upon agricultural yields. Such methods as the introduction of the Japanese intensive method of planting rice can, for example, double yields in certain circumstances. Professors Lewis and Galbraith suggest that the development of an Agricultural Extension Service may be a short cut to the rapid raising of agricultural yields without going through all the social convulsions which seem to be inevitably associated with collectivisation.

No doubt a system of land tenure sufficiently equitable and rational to give the actual cultivator both the opportunity and incentive to increase his production is a prerequisite of progress. To what extent the Indian land reforms have created this prerequisite is a matter of the most acute controversy in India. The visitor can only hazard the guess that (a) they have done so to a much greater degree in some areas than others and (b) the social and political pressures will be sufficient to ensure that in the long run they will do so generally. But given this prerequisite it appears that a really comprehensive Agricultural Extension Service is an instrument of great power for laying hold of the vast, scattered, and otherwise torpid production process of agriculture, and developing it sufficiently to provide the disposable surplus of food without which industrial development is impossible. It may prove hardly too much to say that when and if the Indian Government has succeeded in covering the whole face of rural India with the net of the National Extension Service it will have created, for the first time, an instrument capable of making the decisions of the Government genuinely operative in the lives of the Indian farmers, who comprise some ninety per cent of the population. In the meanwhile, what the National Extension Service is already doing is to provide the indispensable vehicle by means of which, in Indian

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conditions, decisive technical advances, such as selected seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, and better cultivation generally, can get applied by an ever growing proportion of the Indian peasants.

The Indian National Extension Service is led by a dynamic figure, Mr. S. K. Dey, whom I saw at work addressing a conference of his Information Officers. The National Extension Service struck me as the most important single feature of Indian social and economic effort today.

INDIAN agricultural production has, of course, been remarkably buoyant under the First Five Year Plan, but conservative critics are inclined to attribute this to a run of good monsoons. I asked Mr. Deshmukh about this. He claimed that the monsoon, though important, was not as large a factor as people supposed. India was so large that the monsoon was almost always bad somewhere and good somewhere else. His statisticians tell him that taking 100 as a yield in a normal monsoon, the worst monsoons give a yield of 94 and the best a yield of 106.

In this agricultural field, as in every field of development, the Indians are more and more often comparing their own performance with that of the Chinese. For example, I am told that during the final session of the National Development Council which met in May 1956 and formally adopted the Second Five Year Plan, Nehru severely lectured the members of the Council because he had just read that the Chinese, under their present Plan, were proposing to double agricultural production. Why, he asked, did the Indian Plan call for a far smaller increase?

A race for economic and social development is now on foot between China and India. This does not mean that it is necessary to the stability or success of the Indian democratic régime that India should develop in every respect as fast, or faster than, China. It will be sufficient if India develops, as a minimum, fast enough to keep pace with the natural growth of her labour force, and in the long run, enough to show progress at least in absorbing her existing unemployed. But if she can do this there need be nothing fatal to the survival of Indian democracy in an even faster rate of Chinese development under the forced draft of totalitarian methods. Thus it would be a mistake, I think, to suppose that India's ever-growing attention to China will, so long as the present régime is in power, induce her Government to adopt Communist methods. On the contrary, the effect on Nehru and the Congress régime is to stimulate them to attempt as rapid and successful a development as that of China, but by their own methods. It would only be in the event of a breakdown in the present effort that her preoccupation with China would lead India towards Communism. In that event it might.

An extremely complex but vital part in contemporary Indian politics is being played by the whole question of the development of cottage industries—hand-spinning, hand-loom weaving and, more generally, a "labour-intensive" as against "capital intensive" method of development and production. This controversy is bound up with the whole Ghandiist tradition which is, in some respects, the very centre of Congress doctrine. But it is also profoundly affected by the fact that unemployment and under-employment are India's principal social and economic problem, which no Indian can forget for a moment.

It is impossible to go into this immensely complex question in these notes, except to say that the provisional and extremely empirical solution which appears to have been adopted, for the moment, is on the following lines.

India's major economic effort is to be on orthodox lines. She is to devote the cream of her resources to building a steel industry, a heavy electrical industry, a machine tool industry, to electric generation, to coal mining, to engineering of all sorts, all on the most modern pattern available. But, at the same time, she is to devote much smaller, but quite appreciable, resources to the development and, if necessary, subsidy of hand-spinning, hand-loom weaving, and all cottage industries in general. It must be remembered, of course, that hand-loom weaving, in particular, is by no means dead in India. Quite a

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significant proportion of her textiles are still produced in this way. To what extent India is justified in thus seeking to preserve, and even develop, these archaic methods of production at the expense of her very large mechanised factory-textile industry, is a question which I am not prepared to answer. An extremely complex balance of economic and social considerations seems to be involved. In fact, of course, the decision is being made in a most unscientific and highly political way. The compromise reached may not necessarily be disastrously wrong on that account, however.

I AM inclined to the conclusion that a more important factor for the success or failure of the Plan than the exact policy finally adopted over the Cottage Industries question, is the degree to which India can supply the administrative skills needed. In this field her task is gigantic, but she possesses remarkable assets, as well as some liabilities, for its accomplishment. In the first place she possesses the Indian Civil Service. The I.C.S. is the greatest of all the legacies left behind by Britain. This magnificent Civil Service is, in the opinion of men like Galbraith, who have close acquaintance with the situation in many other under-developed countries, the best administrative apparatus outside Whitehall. Moreover, so far as I could see, it was being recruited and sustained by new entrants to the I.A.S., the "Indian Administrative Service," as the Civil Service is now to be called, of the same high quality, at any rate in what we should call "the administrative grade." To suggest that there was corruption or, for that matter incompetence, in this sphere, would be just as outrageous and insulting as to suggest the same thing about the administrative grade in Whitehall.

Where there *is* corruption and incompetence, no doubt, is in the clerical grades of the Civil Service and in the business world. (Though British Bank managers whom I talked to were reassuring on the extent of it in business.) This is serious, especially it is said on the railways; but as long as the I.C.S. and the I.A.S. are there, there is no danger of the Indian administration "collapsing into a sea of corruption," as is sometimes suggested, often by observers who have spent many years of their lives in India before Independence. (In this connection the visitor to present-day India, while acutely conscious of how little he knows, can hardly resist the impression that it is an even greater handicap to know a great deal about an India which no longer exists.)

The main administrative obstacle to the Plan appears to me to be a different one. The I.C.S., together with the admirable positive qualities which it shares with Whitehall, shares also, to some extent, Whitehall's *laissez-faire*, cautious, non-interventionist, conservative approach to economic affairs. Indian Civil Servants are, for the most part, reluctant planners. And I think it is true to say that this has resulted in delays which have cost India dear, while the Government waited about for private enterprise to undertake developments, which private enterprise had, in fact, neither the capacity nor the intention of undertaking. However, I feel that this difficulty also will be overcome in time. There are some passionately keen democratic socialists amongst the younger men in the I.A.S. and there are some men who have now been completely convinced of the necessity of public initiative amongst the I.C.S. Moreover, the I.C.S. as a whole will always, in the end, do what a firm Government tells it to. And on this matter it is my view that the Government will become more and more firm. The worst difficulty is likely to be sheer shortage of numbers of trained administrative staff to do this gigantic job. And some poor, amateurish, and even starkly incompetent administration will have to be faced as an inevitable overhead cost of rapid industrialisation.

THE chariot which every Indian politician hears at his back is, of course, that of the remorseless increase in population. Not only are there eleven million unemployed but a vast, though unknown, proportion of the peasant ninety per cent of the population

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are under-employed for half the year or more. Moreover, great successes in health measures, some slight improvement in the standard of life, malaria control, etc., seem likely, in the absence of other factors, greatly to speed up the population increase in the immediate future. (At present the population grows by nearly five millions a year.)

Opinion on birth control is divided but only in this sense; there is little or no religious prejudice against it, but many Indians despair of the practicability of teaching birth control methods to a population at the level of development of the Indian workers and peasants. They believe that only economic development, sufficiently rapid to raise the standard of life in spite of the growth of population, can open the way to family limitation.

On the other hand, some good judges, including, I found, Mr. Deshmukh, take the opposite view. (I had, in fact, only one serious conversation with Deshmukh and saw less of him than Nehru, T. T. Krishnmachari, and several other leading public men, but I quote him repeatedly because he seemed to have an extraordinary ability to sum up clearly and briefly India's outstanding problems.) They consider that a really vigorous birth control propaganda campaign, even with present methods, could begin, at any rate, to check the population increase, and are earnestly advocating a large-scale effort on these lines. I was very interested to find that Professor Galbraith, who has been intimately connected with development in Puerto Rico, confirms this view. He says that in spite of the opposition of the Church in a completely Catholic population, a well-directed effort at family limitation is now reducing the Puerto Rican birthrate by one point a year.

It is, above all, these pressures, more acutely felt by Indian public men with every passing year, which, I am convinced, will drive India on into industrialisation. The sheer pressure of population and of unemployment, above all perhaps of middle-class unemployment, would become intolerable unless there was rapid industrial development. The example of Chinese industrialisation would soon overwhelm a static India. Her workers, her peasants and, above all, her middle-class, would find it intolerable to be left without jobs while, somehow or other, and at whatever cost, the Chinese people were getting them. Therefore, a policy of even relative stagnation—even of caution—is simply impracticable; and few, if any, capable Indian politicians, whatever their private views may be, any longer support it. Moreover, they are convinced that the only possible method of rapid industrialisation is by means of the direct construction of basic industries on the part of the Government. The Congress Party, which has been largely non-socialist in outlook, and which still contains strongly anti-socialist elements, has been brought to the point of adopting its present socialistic policies, predominantly for the above empirical consideration. I do not doubt that if an energetic and capable Indian entrepreneurial class, willing and able to carry through the indispensable process of basic industrialisation, had appeared, it would have been allowed to have its chance. But no such class of tough, vigorous, risk-taking industrial entrepreneurs is even in sight.

ON THE contrary, Indian big business has been, in practice, opposed to the attempt to establish basic industries in India. It has been sceptical alike of the need for such industries and of the possibility of a market for their products. The Chief Secretary (corresponding to our Permanent Under-Secretary) of one of the Indian Government Departments described the process to me in these terms.

"There have hitherto always been three stages in the establishment of a new industry in India," he said. "First we consult big business and we are told that there is no possibility of establishing the industry in question —above all because there would be no market for its products. This consultation takes anything up to two years. Second, the Government decides that India must have the industry. We again consult big business, which tells us not to worry—that if we really want the industry they will go ahead and establish

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it. Then nothing happens for another two years. Third, after four wasted years, the Government decides to go ahead and build the industry itself. And when we have built it we find that it is not half large enough to meet the demand for its product."

It has been this sort of thing which has driven Congress to the Left, since the experienced politicians who guide the Indian Government know well that successful and rapid industrialisation is a prerequisite for the survival of their régime. However, the lack of enterprise of Indian big business can be understood. No doubt on any normal commercial forecast there did not seem, five years ago, to have been any prospect of a demand for far more steel, heavy electrical equipment, or machine tools than were already being produced. In any under-developed country, the only thing which can create the market for industrial products is, precisely, the decision to devote a really significant proportion of the national effort to the process of industrialisation. And the decision could only, in Indian conditions, come from the Government.

This understandable, but crucial, lack of enterprise on the part of Indian big business renders it certain, in my view, that the alternative to the present democratic socialist effort would not be, in any circumstances, a return to private enterprise capitalism. The failure of the present Plan would mean a period of chaos followed, not necessarily in the first instance at any rate by orthodox Communism, but by some form of dictatorial and totalitarian régime which imposed industrialisation still more rapidly and left a far smaller sphere for private enterprise than is at present proposed. Such an alternative régime would sacrifice the present admirable liberal features of Indian life, such as Parliamentary government, free press, complete freedom of discussion, association and assembly, etc. Nor in present world circumstances can one envisage such a régime failing to fall under the domination of China and Russia and becoming, in effect, a Communist régime, however weak the Indian Communists may be today.

The success of the present democratic socialist Plan is by no means assured. It will indeed be a remarkable feat if the Indian people succeed in the task of primary accumulation while preserving democratic institutions. So far as I know, no country, with the partial exception of America, has ever succeeded in doing so. On the other hand, India has certain considerable advantages and, given favourable circumstances, I believe that there is a real and substantial chance that the Plan will succeed, sufficiently, at any rate, to preserve Indian democracy, and to prevent India slipping into the totalitarian camp with all the immeasurable consequences of such an event. Hence, I am convinced that the West as a whole, and Britain in particular, has a huge stake in the success of the Indian Five Year Plan, however much some Western opinion may dislike the socialist character of the Plan itself, or the foreign policy of the present Indian Government.

WHILE I was in India, a new "Industrial Policy Statement" was issued, superseding the Statement made in 1948. These Industrial Policy Statements give an account of the Indian Government's intentions in the industrial sphere. The present, May 1956, Statement was the result of a fairly prolonged struggle behind the scenes within the governmental apparatus. I had the opportunity of witnessing this struggle at fairly close quarters. The final draft of this Statement reserved all future development in seventeen basic industries, set out by name in a schedule, for the State. Existing private firms in these fields, where they existed, were not necessarily or immediately to be nationalised, but they were to be, as it were, by-passed by large-scale State enterprises, which would more and more overshadow them. Thus in the key instance of steel, the present position is that Tatas are producing rather more than one million tons of steel per year in the main Indian steel works. They are to be left undisturbed, but an additional five million tons of steel are to be produced largely in three new government-owned steel works. This will give an output of six million-plus tons of steel in

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five years time; and it is already foreshadowed that this will be raised to fifteen million tons by the end of the Third Five Year Plan in ten years time. In other cases, such as the heavy electrical industry, there is no private development, and the industry will be wholly State-owned from the start. The new Industrial Policy Statement also lists eleven other industries in which public development is to predominate. Over the rest of the field—essentially light industry, commerce, distribution, etc.—private industry will predominate, but the State makes it clear that it may start enterprises even in these fields.

This fairly drastic Industrial Policy Statement, which had been strongly opposed by the more conservative influences within the governmental apparatus, was greeted with positive relief by Indian capitalist interests and their spokesmen in the press. This extraordinary reaction was due, I think, to several causes.

(i) The Indian capitalists feared that the Statement would be even worse. They were greatly relieved that it did not propose the nationalisation of existing enterprises.

(ii) The Indian capitalists are not much interested in establishing enterprises in the heavy industrial field. They consider this too risky a business. They are discouraged by the heavy capital investment involved. They feel they can use their money much more profitably and safely in commerce, light industry, and money-lending. Tatas are the main exception and they were reported to be deeply disturbed by the New Industrial Policy Statement.

(iii) The mental climate of India is such that it would be considered unpatriotic openly to resist the policy of the Congress Government led by Nehru. Congress is still the party of national unity, and the fact that its policy has become strongly socialist has not altered this.

But whatever the reasons, I was greatly impressed by the extreme relative weakness of Indian capitalism compared with Western capitalism. It could exercise relatively little political leverage. Indian capitalists take short views. They are not really concerned about the fact that the Government's announced policies must mean, if they are carried through, that India will be a socialist country in which they will have little future as capitalists, within, say, fifteen years' time. Indeed, the main resistance to the new socialist policy seemed to come more from the older members of the Civil Service, and from some of the older generation of Congress political leaders themselves, than from the capitalists as such. But this struggle within the governmental apparatus appears, for the present at any rate, to have been won, largely thanks to the Prime Minister's own predominant influence, by the pro-socialist elements.

The British observer will welcome, or deplore, these tendencies according to his own political convictions. As a democratic socialist I welcome them wholeheartedly. But even from a democratic socialist point of view, it is of course possible to view the present trends with apprehension. For instance, Dr. Balogh returned last year from India as a supporter, indeed, of the Second Five Year Plan, but expressing much concern lest the policy itself led to "totalitarian planning." With respect, I came to the conclusion that, on the contrary, an effort on the lines of the present Second Five Year Plan combined, as it is, with the full maintenance of all the democratic freedoms in India, was the one practical alternative to forced industrialisation along totalitarian lines. In other words, anything *less* "Left Wing" than the present Plan would not really have a chance in the Indian situation.

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NOTES FROM A DIARY

Rembrandt at Rotterdam

From Le Zoute, in Belgium, where we went for two weeks in August, I drove over to Rotterdam to see the Rembrandt ($3\frac{1}{2}$ Centenary) Exhibition at the Boymans Museum. No other such display of the life-work of an "old master" has so shaken my ideas about painting. Just to go from the Rembrandts to the galleries in the museum devoted to modern painting is to receive a shock. Nearly everything seems shallow, provincial, eccentric, experimental. Even Courbet seems thin.

Every modern approach seems challenged by him. At all events, that is the impression one gets ten minutes after this exhibition. Even if one rapidly becomes involved in contemporary solutions again, the thoughts arising from being momentarily disentangled, are worth considering.

The Self-portrait Through All

His self-portraits are a vision that drives through all his painting. They reveal a face, or succession of faces, suggesting the life-span of a ship. In the earliest self-portraits it is all set out for sunlit waters, pointing to happiness, acclaiming the toast of the voyage success. At the end, it is a battered hulk, with the nobly quizzical look that will confront the ship breakers.

Meanwhile, the paint has got thicker, not just opaque, but also transparently thick, layer across layer, as though each surface were the note of a rising chord whose ultimate finger pressed against the surface of the canvas. The succession of self-portraits over a great many years, also makes a chord, note by note from the beginning to the very end, as though one could see through the later ones the earlier, which add up to the old Rembrandt. Through a portrait such as the very late one in the National Gallery (London) one can look back to the gay young man of the *Self-portrait with Halberd*.

The superimposed layers of paint in those pictures which are not of himself, are charged with the search for his own identity. The motive of the self-portrait is there in a landscape or the background of a Still Life. In certain pictures the "subject" is not so moving as some apparently minor or background effect. In the portrait of Titus seated at his desk, more moving than the face of the boy (which in reproduction looks a bit like Greuze) is the quality of the dense overlaid painting of the wooden front of the desk. In the wonderful family group, from Brunswick, the texture of the painting of the red-coloured skirts of mother and child is as profoundly touching as the flesh of the ruinous face in the late self-portraits.

The Single-minded Pursuit

Rembrandt's preoccupation was the research of his own identity. Even his religion seems an aid to this discovery of qualities essentially Rembrandtesque. He shows the way of solving problems which he makes seem our own through his single-mindedness. That is why, when one wanders off into the other galleries, later painting seems superficial after an hour or so with Rembrandt. Cézanne remains the exception: the one great recent example of singleness of purpose. This is the impression confirmed by the wonderful exhibition at the *Kunsthaus* in Zurich. Seeing there Cézanne's own self-portraits, is it altogether fanciful to discover a parallel self-portrayal in the searching, tentatively meeting and sometimes crossing lines of the brush strokes in Cézanne's landscapes?

Paul Klee at Berne

After the pouring rain of Le Zoute, we spent the rest of August in the pouring rain of Gstaad. From there, we drove to Berne to see the immense exhibition of 756 paintings by Paul Klee.

The ideal way of exhibiting Klee would be not in a cleanly, bleakly hung Swiss art gallery, but in a maze, catacombs, or on the few still standing walls of a bombed city. They should confront the spectator at turnings, leap up at him out of darkness. All the same, I no longer feel, as I did previously, that it is a mistake to see more than half a dozen Klees at one time. Only when one sees a great many, does one realise the extent, and the relevance, of his comment. He makes one think of two other

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K's: Franz Kafka and the self-portrayed hero of *The Castle*.

Like Kafka's, Klee's seems a one man "underground" movement. In a technique so peculiar as to seem to come out of and lead to nowhere —a technique totally personal and at the same time as completely anonymous as graffiti discovered accidentally, or children's drawings— he scratches his poetic cryptograms over the scattered fragments of a civilisation. Like Kafka he constructs an æsthetic out of the refusal to accept any public values whatever, or to be in any way pompous. He makes nearly all paintings by his contemporaries—and some of his own later ones—appear pictures painted for galleries, by comparison with the secret private magic of his art. His is the language of those who recognise in contemporary institutions only the walls on which they scratch something irreverent which has its own kind of sacredness. He is ironic about machinery in a painting like *The Twittering Machine,* but he can discover the unique visual poem to express ideas such as *Polar Landscape* or a Grecian column.

Klee's painting has a kind of enforced innocence: innocence of one who recognises something in his age which forces him back, for truth and beauty, on to the idiom of children and exiles. The earliest work shows how his style grows out of Rackham-like illustrations to children's fairy tales, and the minutely detailed traveller's sketch of some scene of trees and water, done with the finest point of a pencil. From these beginnings develops the magic of those who are sharers of a secret, and the irony towards those who are not. But the satire errs whenever it strays on to party lines, as in the drawing of an English Lord done during the first World War. Paradoxically, Klee errs in another kind of way when, at the end of his life, he emerges from a maze and with some very large canvasses suddenly becomes a modern painter who can produce effects of the most luminous colour, in works that could be hung beside a Picasso, surrealists or German expressionists.

Self-conscious Unconsciousness

Klee may have been admired by surrealists but nothing can make it more obvious that he was not one than the paintings by Max Ernst, also now at Berne. Surrealism led to the discovery of the material of the Unconscious in painters and poets who did not call themselves surrealist: Bosch, Fuseli, Blake. But surrealism was one of those things, like spontaneity or naïve charm, which melt away the moment you are conscious of it. Nothing seems more self-conscious today than these attempts to capture the unconscious: and the Max Ernst exhibition shows the tragedy of timeless gifts being put to the service of fading *chic*.

Everything about the surrealists is self-contradictory. At the time, nothing seemed more absurd than their claim to be communists, since surrealism is as much *ex hypothesi* the contradiction of social realism as it is the negation of the unconscious. All the same, it is perhaps as social prophets who are also social symptoms that they will be remembered, and it may well be that the people they most interest today are the social or politically minded. Looking through Werner Haftmann's *Malerei im 20 Jahrhundert,* one can find a social explanation for almost all the illustrations from the surrealist painters. Max Ernst's *Die Horde* seems a comment on the revolt of the masses rather than—as I suppose it to be—a realisation of unconscious forces (perhaps, though these are the same thing). His jungles and moon-scapes and the map of "Europe after the Deluge" (shown at Berne) seem prophecies of post H-Bomb chaos. Joan Miro did the most successful of posters for Republican Spain: much of Picasso's near-surrealist painting all seems to grow out of the Spanish Civil War. As people noticed at the time bomb damage provided European cities with many confirmations of Dali.

The reason for all this may be that the closest we can come to describing unconsciousness becoming conscious is by observing the expressions of the mass mind, perhaps through the behaviour of its leaders. Hitler as mouthpiece of the masses was a surrealist phenomenon and his actions in fact provided the surrealists with their best material. Since his death, the movement has lost its real impetus, though perhaps it will be provided soon, from the Middle East. The surrealists were always greatly drawn to pyramids and deserts. Surrealism expresses the unpleasant truth evaded by social realists.

Stephen Spender

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Ultra-Modern Greats

THE founders of physics and chemistry were fortunate to live in the days before the literary reviews and the Sunday papers were set up as courts of enquiry into dereliction of academic duty. One can just imagine Mr. Justice Kristol and Mr. Inquisitor Toynbee putting them through it: "What, not even *trying* to find the philosopher's stone? Casting cold grey academic doubt on the cherished ideals of defenceless humanity . . . ?" "We who have read the scientific works of fifty years ago feel in our bones that there *must* be such a substance as phlogiston, and while you go on denying it we'll keep our praise for the fearless workers who defy your small-minded scorn and go on labouring in the Great Alchemical Tradition."

The literary cohorts now drawn up against philosophy are not wholly to be blamed if their muskets are pointing in a number of different wrong directions. The enemy has not always taken the trouble to send them despatches about the position of his forces. But they would be able to score more direct hits if they had a better intelligence service, and if they stopped relying on memoirs written after the last campaign but three. Mr. Kristol's second thoughts on *Philosophy, Politics, and Society* (ENCOUNTER, September) still do not reveal that intimate familiarity with their theme which would surely and rightly have been required by the Editors of ENCOUNTER if the theme had been recent literature or recent painting instead of recent philosophy.

The trouble is that we have not had an expositor with the gifts of Professor Ayer to do for contemporary philosophy what he did for a transient phase of the philosophy of the twenties and thirties. Until someone writes a book with the same incisiveness and the same sales-figures as *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), but giving an account of the later work of Wittgenstein and the work of Professor Wisdom, Professor Ryle, and their colleagues and pupils, the professional intelligentsia will continue to say and believe that all the philosophers of today, and not only a few arch-conservatives, are still writing footnotes to the papers of the Vienna Circle.

Wittgenstein makes difficult reading, and *Philosophical Investigations* cannot be prescribed as a set book for the general reader. But it is fair to ask that those who take it upon themselves to present the latest philosophical news to a suspicious public should first read Professor Wisdom's *Philosophical Perplexity* (Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1936–37), which was prising open cracks in logical positivism before Professor Ayer's ink was dry. And if articles in philosophical journals are non-U, there is a reprint of this paper, together with many other excellent pieces of philosophy and literature, in *Philosophy and Psycho-analysis* (1953). Let Mr. Kristol read Wisdom's papers on "Gods," on "Things and Persons," on "Metaphysics and Verification," on "Philosophy and Psycho-analysis," and then tell us whether he still thinks of all the philosophers of 1956 as copying-clerks to the philosophers of 1926.

Mr. Kristol's assessment of *Philosophy, Politics, and Society* is simply an application to political philosophy of his initial misconception about philosophy in general. While it is true that Mr. Weldon and Dr. Glanville Williams write with some of the old evangelical fervour, it cannot be said of any of the contributors that they "seemed to be saying that there were no questions, only pseudo-questions." What a number of writers did say or imply was that one type of question had often been confused with another; that questions about natural rights had been confused with those about legal rights; that enquiries into the nature of the good life had been confused with enquiries into the nature of the universe. But when philosophers make and support such claims as these, they are after all doing what Mr. Kristol calls upon them to do, namely reflecting on the nature of the questions that men ask and the answers that they give, and on the relation between questions and answers in one field and questions and answers in another. Mr. Kristol's parallel between philosophy of science and philosophy of politics is a valuable and illuminating one. But there is a difference between a philosopher of science and a philosophical scientist and between a philosopher of politics and a philosophical politician. There is a place for very general reflections on very general political problems. What begins as a question about whether a

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particular order should be obeyed may become a question about the nature of authority; what begins as a question about a particular motor-strike may become a question about Justice and the Good Society. But however abstruse and general and academic such reflections become, they are still *political* reflections, even if they may be called *philosophical* reflections on politics. They are quite different from reflections on political philosophy considered as a part of philosophy and not as a part of politics: reflections on the relation between political proposals and the arguments used in support of them, or on the possibility of a political science which will be prescriptive as well as descriptive and analytic.

EVEN when these two studies are carefully distinguished it will not do to assume that only one of them is of any practical importance, and it will certainly not do to dismiss work done under one heading because it does not fall under the other. Even the more academic of the two disciplines could not be less of a merely academic study than it is at the present time, when two such important and otherwise dissimilar authorities as the Vatican and the Kremlin subscribe to the same false view of the nature of political questions and answers, the view that in any political conflict at least one side must be either ignorant or wicked or both, and what is more, *demonstrably* ignorant or wicked. The faulty logic on which this view is based needs to be corrected if it is not to continue to have undesirable practical consequences. A similar false view lies behind the growing modern trust of experts in politics and administration, the idea that questions of policy, like questions of fact or technique, can be scientifically and definitively answered.

Those of us who do the kind of work that Mr. Kristol condemns are indeed defending a traditionally English view of the rights of the individual and the freedom of personal choice and judgement: we do "deny any special competence" to our own or anybody else's political opinions: but he must refute our arguments, and not merely remark on our places of birth, if he wishes his opposition to our views to carry conviction. He will never dispose of our arguments by complaining at one and the same time that we are too modest and too arrogant, that we have no political views and that we are all passionate Little Englanders.

I agree with Mr. Kristol that there is a regrettable lack of the other kind of political philosophy, of general reflections on the problems of our time. If this kind of work is not done well by philosophers it may be done badly by others. But better that it should not be done at all than that it should be done on the assumption, shared by Mr. Kristol, Mr. Khrushchev, and His Holiness the Pope, that the function of the political philosopher is to discover and proclaim the authoritative answers to those questions which in Little England we feel entitled to decide for ourselves.

RENFORD BAMBROUGH
St. John's College, Cambridge

I HOPE Mr. Laslett's quarrel with Mr. Kristol is not a private one, since, like the proverbial Irishman, I should like to butt in. Mr. Kristol's viewpoint is, in any case, widespread. Philosophers used to try to understand and explain "reality" as a whole and to establish universal truths; now they merely study the different ways in which silly people say silly things. So the tale goes and, oddly enough, even Bertrand Russell, who ought to know better, has lately been repeating it. But this sort of criticism, while its premises are partly right and partly wrong, is wholly misconceived.

It is true that in bygone days philosophers used to be fond of making what Locke called "little excursions into natural philosophy," i.e. into science. They still do occasionally, but they no longer regard it as their function for the very good reason that empirical questions can only be settled experimentally and not by abstract speculation, and this fact is now generally recognised. Accordingly the scientific questions were taken over by scientists—first the "natural sciences" such as chemistry and physics, then the social sciences, and finally psychology. Philosophers no longer consider themselves competent to pronounce upon such matters, and this is not as Mr. Kristol seems to think a case of excessive humility but of sheer common sense. The Hegelian dream of blue-printing the Universe from an arm-chair by the exercise of pure reason is a delusion. This is confirmed not only by the relative success of experimental studies as contrasted with the complete failure of the rationalists to establish any truths or explain anything, but also by the investigations carried out by Wittgenstein and others into the nature of deductive logic. These have shown that, roughly speaking, all pure logical studies such as mathematics are simply elaborate systems of tautologies. There are no *a priori* truths or (if you extend "true" to include "formally correct") what is true *a priori* is not factual.

It is conceded then that traditional philosophy included some crude science and that modern philosophy, occasional lapses apart, does not. It is, however, clear that this restriction is no loss and that the "scientific" parts of the old philosophies can safely be ignored. Text-books of

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biology are not nowadays based on Aristotle. It is also true that modern philosophers concentrate on linguistic analysis and that this does involve studying what people say, including the silly things which are often particularly interesting. It is also true in a way that philosophy has become, as Mr. Kristol suggests, a subject without a subject-matter. Philosophers do not try to establish special propositions of their own, but to make ordinary propositions clear. What is false is the belief that this represents a complete change from the older methods and a harmful one. On the contrary, philosophers have always spent most of their time, apart from the aforesaid "little excursions," in talking about the use of words. The only difference is that they often did not know they were doing so, whereas the more competent moderns do at least know what they are doing. This is pure gain since if you do not understand what question you are asking, you are not likely to find a sensible answer; indeed, unless you understand what sort of question you want to ask, you are not likely to ask a sensible question.

THE trouble in the old philosophy arose partly from a failure to distinguish meaning from reference, but mainly from the connected failure to distinguish material sentences from semantic ones. This was a natural mistake to make since semantic sentences were often expressed in the material mode. Thus in Plato's *Republic* you find Thrasymachus saying "Justice is the interest of the stronger." In Tolstoy's *What is Art* you are told that art is so-and-so and is not such-and-such. But these were supposed to be enquiries into the nature of justice and art *without prior definition*. Consequently such sentences, however they were intended, can only function as semantic sentences. Since most sentences of this kind are not factual statements of actual usage they can only be idiosyncratic or persuasive definitions, on the totally irrelevant basis of which their authors came to such "conclusions" as appealed to them. This is an amusing game, but it is hardly conducive to enlightenment about the nature of "reality as a whole" or indeed about anything. Of course this is not the whole story and I have very much compressed and simplified even this part.

Mr. Kristol thinks that "the problem of when a citizen has the right and duty to disobey the laws of his country" is a real and urgent problem and blames modern philosophers for not attending to it. If he would do a careful analysis of "right" and "duty" he might see just why they do not try to answer the question "When has a citizen the right and duty to disobey the laws of his country?" To put it mildly, it is not a very clear question. They do do their best to clarify such questions (in this connection Mr. Kristol might have a look at Nowell-Smith's *Ethics*) but it is not their job to lay down golden rules of behaviour for all imaginable circumstances—people must make their own moral decisions.

Mr. Kristol also says, and I agree with him, that there are more important things in life than not talking nonsense. But if you are going to do a deal of talking and writing, to learn to avoid talking and writing nonsense is not a bad starting point. At a time when talking and writing and reading nonsense has become a dangerous national addiction—as witness the sales of *The Outsider*—the exposure of nonsense as such has become a useful, perhaps even a vital, national service.

"A devotion to truth is not the same thing as a devotion to other men's fallacies." Well, of course not. Presumably Mr. Kristol means a devotion to *exposing* other men's fallacies. He may still be right but a devotion to truth may involve exposing fallacies. This occupation is naturally not very popular with those who are literally devoted to other men's fallacies or their own—particularly when their devotion is both extreme and extensive. It has to be pursued nevertheless.

The rôle of intellectual charladies who clean up other people's conceptual messes is admittedly not a sublime one. It has, however, a certain usefulness, and criticism of it comes least appropriately from those who are still busily engaged in making the messes.

E. W. BEAL

London, S.W.7

Teddy-boy Criticism

LAST month's ENCOUNTER contained a long, angry, and impolite letter about myself from Mr. Dwight Macdonald, which I brushed off with a joke. This seemed the least unprofitable way of dealing with it, since it contained nothing that could not be answered by simple iteration of what had already been lucidly enough expressed in the review to which he had taken objection. However, I suppose that not to take Mr. Macdonald *seriously* (in the sense in which he would understand such a word) might be thought to imply a weak case. May I comment, therefore?

1. Against the charge of insincerity, one can only say (I think) that it is not the sort of charge that should be brought. I am personally totally unacquainted with Mr. Macdonald. How the devil would he know whether I was sincere or

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not? (I pay him the compliment of assuming he is.) I was *genuinely* disappointed in *A Charmed Life* because I have liked and admired other things Miss Mary McCarthy has written, and because there are too few people of her intellectual gifts about to make it an occasion for rejoicing when one of them appears to have fallen, even temporarily, by the wayside.

2. It is objected that I led up to my final judgment on Miss McCarthy's book "without argument." This is the sort of comment that leaves me baffled. I devoted to her one and a half columns of clear and close argument, together with illustrative material. If Mr. Macdonald had cared to refute or reply to this argument at any point, that would have been something: to deny its existence, is not.

3. Mr. Macdonald queries the force of the word "really." It means "genuinely, as contrasted with the sense in which it is used by Mr. Edmund Wilson." This is perfectly clear from the context and should present no difficulties to anyone capable of tackling "comprehension tests" at the elementary school level.

4. To Mr. Macdonald's objection that a passage quoted from Miss McCarthy "illustrates a point nothing to do with truth, sordidness, or cleverness, nor does he otherwise by analysis or exposition, etc., etc," I can do no more than once again wearily give him the lie direct. How would you, Mr. Editor, reply to a complaint that ENCOUNTER was printed upside down on pink paper and consisted entirely of Portuguese sonnets, except by asserting that the case was otherwise?

5. To my mistake about "the whole of Poe's criticism" (but to no other), I plead guilty. But then why does Mr. Macdonald himself quote the actual number as "half a dozen" when a glance at the book itself shows that there are in fact eleven? My mistake was perfectly innocent and surely unimportant—after all, one does not need to know the *whole* of a man's criticism before deciding whether it is good or not? But his would appear either grossly careless or malicious.

6. Poe on Channing is not "a little masterpiece of the same order as" Twain on *Cooper's Literary Offenses*. That both are detailed attacks, they certainly have in common. In that Twain was genial and right, and Poe was savage and wrong, they differ.

7. I was considerably annoyed by Mr. Macdonald's accusation that I do not suffer from the "noble defect of going into detail." Strictly limited as I am to sixteen hundred or so words in which to cover usually four books, I don't think I do so badly. Mr. Macdonald must be perfectly well aware of the shortage of newsprint. Anyway, he had just complained of my devoting a whole column to Poe on Channing, so which way does he want it?

These are only a few of the points raised by Mr. Macdonald, but must suffice. That he should be upset by seeing his own literary dogmas questioned, and analytically questioned at that, is natural; but it should not have stung him into denying the existence of my arguments or the sincerity of my views, or into himself substituting (in his own words) "violence of expression for analysis, and rhetoric for thought." I jocularly forecast, in my original review, the arrival of "eccentrically abusive notes" from St. Ives: that New Leeds itself should have contributed one is an altogether unexpected pleasure and more, much more, than could have been hoped for. It could have done, however, with being a little more eccentric and a little less abusive.

HILARY CORKE

London, S.W. 10

This New England

WILL you allow a New Town architect to comment on a belated reading of "This New England"?

Mr. Fyvel paints a gloomy picture of the collapse of the *haute bourgeoisie* before the advance of the *Admass*. We are to visualise a defeated ruling class, deprived of its "gentlemen's clubs, amateur sports, long weekends, French cuisine, Finishing Schools," etc., etc., and hiding its eyes in yew-girt Dorset rectories and riverside studios while subtopia ramps irresistibly over England. He instances, as pathetic figures swimming against the tide, a nameless Borough Engineer, dreaming of pre-industrial Welsh cottages but forced to erect "nothing but two-storey semi-detached," though most were "of relatively pleasing design, and their coloured doorways had a neo-Georgian look"; and the planner of Harlow New Town, who was starry-eyed enough to write of Edinburgh, Bath, Oxford, and Florence as exemplars. Both men, we must note, are quoted as backward-looking and defeated people. Yet the article ends, astonishingly enough, with the nameless Borough Engineer left alone upon the stage, a "key figure" who could do great things given more scope and authority.

Of course all this has its grain of truth. The New Towns are disappointingly dull because they date from the heyday of what Mr. Fyvel calls "mass participation," and represent the lowest common denominator of countless public opinion polls and plain-man committees. Their originators missed the point that it was vital from the very start that they should be new

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Chelseas and not new Tootings, and so set them much too low a density. Even so, they would probably have consisted in the end of little houses on grass for the simple reason that three-storey houses on pavements cost in this country substantially more and high flats a great deal more.

But to solve our problem we need no father-figure like the nameless Borough Engineer and no prophet like Ruskin or Morris. Mr. Fyvel has forgotten that a technocracy already exists, in the form (in this case) of a whole generation of young architects, who have never seen the inside of a gentleman's club or a finishing school, but who believe they know what has to be done, and have already demonstrated a new kind of urban living in the great new London housing projects and in one or two provincial cities. Roehampton Lane may not be everybody's brave new world; genuine agoraphobes will almost certainly have to be accommodated out in the countryside, as in this part of Oxfordshire, where more B.M.C. operatives than you would think possible are tucked away under the skirts of ancient elmy villages. Either way, we have an answer to subtopia.

The most impressive achievement of this technocracy so far has been the new schools. In fact they may possibly be, not only visually but in terms of hard economics, this country's best products since the war. Children from the subtopian wilderness, spending their days in this alternative world, may perhaps learn, among other illogicalities such as the co-existence of science and religion, the necessity for the existence, right through the Admass century, of this kind of ruling (or rather leading) class renewed in each generation. Without it, as your contributors recognise, we shall surmount neither our environmental crisis nor our others.

LIONEL BRETT

Watlington Park, Oxford

Return to Wigan Pier

IF ENCOUNTER wishes to be considered an informative journal with a sincere regard for truth, Wayland Young's worthless article on Wigan in the June issue belies it. Clearly accuracy is not Mr. Young's strong point. He cannot even give the population of Wigan correctly as 85,000. . . . To explode Mr. Young's myth, Wigan is cleaner than most industrial towns and it possesses picturesqueness and character. It has proportionately fewer slums than many other northern towns such as Oldham, Leeds, and Salford. Many roads are tree-lined and the town itself is well supplied with parks and open spaces. Wigan is a healthy place in which to live as proved by the Registrar-General's vital statistics. It is most progressive from the industrial and administrative standpoint. An internationally famous food-processing firm now engaged on building a mammoth modern factory on the outskirts of the town certainly does not share Mr. Young's views. The shopping centre is so excellent as to draw many shoppers from towns as far away as Bolton and Southport.

Culturally and educationally Wigan is in the forefront. It is well supplied with bookshops which have on their shelves practically every book published in this country on the day of publication. Its public library service is one of the finest in the country and despite television the public's appreciation and use of the service are reflected in the three-quarters of a million books borrowed every year, a high proportion of which are non-fiction.

I am a southerner who has lived in Wigan for the past six years and I feel called upon to repudiate Mr. Young's malicious article in its entirety.

H. H. G. ARTHUR

Wigan

[*Mr. Young comments:*

I hope nobody will be misled by Mr. Arthur's ridiculous letter into thinking that Wigan is a ridiculous place. It is, as I described it, an active, prosperous, sober, grimy, industrial town. Mr. Arthur, who is, I believe, the Borough Librarian, ought to have a wide enough outlook to realise that this is a perfectly good thing for a town to be, instead of pretending it's something like Oxford or Edinburgh.]

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Thoughts After a Car Crash

THE surface of a Jackson Pollock canvas involves us in the most raw visual sensation of applied paint that we are likely to have experienced. The marks strike directly on the nerves and one is as surprised to see them there, like that, as one would be if one returned home and saw them spread across the carpets. There is not even, as there is in most abstract painting, a form made up of paint-marks like a wall of bricks; there are only the marks trailing and spattering. In the paintings best known to us they make a loose, shapeless mess of paint without any apparent will to form.

Pollock's pictures are like a trail of deliberate clues telling us what he was, and about him painting. Since as far back as impressionism, the artist has been the hero of his own painting. The impressionist paints objects which disappear when he turns his back: his pictures are a handmade record of his impressions at a particular time. (In a similar way Professor Haldane records his impressions while being slowly frozen in a large refrigerator: in both cases it is about himself that he speaks.) This subjectivity asserts the artist's condition in a new way. There are many empty landscapes painted before 1870 but none makes us feel the isolation of the artist in the way that Van Gogh's pictures of the plain of Crau make us feel his isolation, or any Provençal landscape by Cézanne his. Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, and Franz Kline have something of this isolation. They accept their environment, the metropolitan tangle and the loose mesh of its outskirts, as though it had all been made one day just before they moved in, can see it without nostalgia, pride, or fear, and watch the machinery grind without wincing. They are phlegmatic, made free, as one is in a city, by hostility. As Rothko puts it:

Freed from a false sense of security and community, the artist can abandon his plastic bankbook, just as he has abandoned other forms of security.

Once we accept the artist as a hero we also look in his work for a lead outside art, an indication of some course of audacious action, or commitment. Finding himself called upon to give a sign which will, he knows, be interpreted in moral or political terms, the artist may accept this respect as his due and replan the world to his taste, or, in his panic, simply point ahead in the direction that he happens to be running, or, aware that there is a mistake and the situation is getting out of hand, retire and leave his telephone unhooked. Once alone, he will invent a game to pass the time. Schwitters went under the table with his bus tickets and barked at the visitors. Duchamp like a royal prisoner worked out chess problems. Morandi quietly stares at his hypnotic crockery, which changes before our eyes into a distant village or people forbidden to speak. Across the floor of Giacometti's studio with its deposit of dust and plaster an image of a nude woman stares back at us until the light is turned off. In Jackson Pollock's room a canvas nailed to the floor records with limp trails of paint his aimless gestures above the cigarette butts.

This private game becomes both the artist's work and his life. De Kooning remarks:

Painting . . . is a way of living, today, a style of living so to speak. . . . It is exactly in its uselessness that it is free.

JACKSON POLLOCK was born at Cody, Wyoming on January 28th, 1912. One of his early teachers was the realist painter Thomas Hart Benton, and some of the hairy-chestedness of the realist has remained in his later work. He worked for some time with the W.P.A. and in 1940 began painting abstract pictures. He had his first one-man show at "Art of This Century" in November 1943. His painting since 1940 falls into three groups. The first group carry such titles as *Pasiphae*, *Magic Mirror*, *Masqued Image*, *The She-Wolf*, *Totem II*—titles which indicate a preoccupation with magical revelation and archaic ritual. The marks in these paintings splash and drag across the surface accompanied by an image which does its best to match them

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with an equal ferocity and inelegance. The slashed strokes and animated, disrupted image makes them look like expressionist pictures. They were not, one feels however, produced by an artist who was prompted to work because he was strongly moved, but because he liked the appearance of expressionist pictures and the kind of activity necessary to simulate them. Pollock's emotion is the outcome of his action. He is like a man who starts breaking stones and then runs amok and breaks heads.

The second group of pictures was produced concurrently with the first and third, and carry such titles as *The Flame*, *Eyes in the Heat*, *White Light*, *Moon Vibrations*. The image is more fragmentary and swift but the paint still drags, thickly. The many small irregular marks piled up like gutted fish hurry the eye over a surface with limits but no focus. Crossing these pictures is like being chased about a muddy field in a glaring light.

The third group includes the numbered paintings and those with titles like *Out of the Web*, *Echo*, *Convergence*, *Search*. These are the pictures with the vertiginous switch-back of paint-trails.

The bits of paint on the canvas have always been regarded as an indication of an artist's style. Since impressionism they have often appeared to have a life of their own—independently, that is, of what is apparently the subject. In Pollock's pictures they relate to his real subject, the act of painting: as in Kandinsky's work the mark is itself, tracing the artist's gestures but illustrating nothing. The unfussed mark is strongly evident in modern painting even with artists like Matisse and Bonnard whose pictures depend on a strong figurative allusion: brush-strokes might be painted out and replaced, but, as a rule, once made they are not coerced into another position. To retain its magic, the mark must remain as made.

In such paintings as *Number 1* the marks are not brush-marks, but the marks made by paint trailing out of a can with a hole in the bottom or by some similar hazardous, awkward method. They could have been made when he was bored or giggling. In these pictures Pollock is no longer simulating expressionism. His state of mind appears more closely to resemble that of Schwitters, whose sophisticated withdrawal left him sceptical and uninvolved, living all the time like a man telling a joke to himself. Pollock's freedom came from this kind of despair, which makes it possible to bustle about, sum things up, give a complete statement without reserve because their is nothing to lose except time.

POLLOCK'S recorded remarks about his work are few. He preferred conversation about motor-cars. However, this statement by Rothko and Gottlieb in the *New York Times*, June 13th, 1943, contains much that he might have agreed with:

To us art is an unknown world which can be explored only by those willing to take risks.

This world of the imagination is fancy-free and violently opposed to common sense. . . .

It is a widely accepted notion among painters that it does not matter what one paints as long as it is well painted. This is the essence of academism. There is no such thing as a good painting about nothing. We assert that the subject is crucial and only that subject-matter is valid which is tragic and timeless. That is why we profess kinship with primitive and archaic art.

The "search" pictures are evidence of Pollock's compulsion to enter "an unknown world" and to "take risks." *Number 1* is the most beautiful of this group to have been shown in London. It is a fragile tracery of lines, very free and delicate with an exact sense of scale which places the spectator at the right distance for viewing. There is about this picture an almost rococo weightlessness and elegance. It is not only in this that Pollock is similar to the rococo artist. If the baroque flourish is bravura, the courage of the man who does not care, in the rococo it is the flourish of the man who is beyond caring. He is the introverted exhibitionist, a sophisticated clown, a giggling courtier, the dandy on a battlefield. He suddenly does what he thought least possible and finds that he has a talent for it. The rococo artist will hint at sinister acts while using all the grace and decoration suitable in a lovers' pavilion. He arouses our suspicion but declines to tell us how to react to the things he hints at. His evocations are free of moral injunction, he is concerned only with trapping rumours of disaster hanging like smoke in a garden. His preoccupation with a dramatic process makes him express reality in terms of an unfolding or ritual.

The need for a form of private ritual exists in many who rely upon delicate decisions for success or failure, for life even. Acrobats, athletes, racing drivers, gamblers, and rakes enact a private ritual which begins elsewhere; a ritual which calms them and puts them in step with the pattern of their decisions. For them the wheel begins to spin while they are dressing or ascending some staircase, spins while they prepare their hands into, or out of, gloves, and while their equipment receives a final, and to others superfluous, check. They appear to be listening to something which one cannot, oneself, hear. Such highly active people are in a sense the passive agents of their talents. Their

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excitement, like a loaded weapon, is held lightly. For the acrobat this calm is part of the compulsion to measure exactly within his body the margin of risk. For the gambler his nonchalance is a way of making a still vessel of himself in which to hold his luck limpid and untroubled. Rothko says:

the presentation of this drama in the familiar world was never possible unless everyday acts belonged to a ritual accepted as referring to a transcendent realm.

Only by making the action refer to a timeless act could the familiar world be presented without banality. This requires the existence of a world of magical intermediaries, monsters, gods, demigods, heroes. But now that our thought has become secularised

the disguise must be complete. The familiar identity of things has to be pulverised in order to destroy the finite association with which our society increasingly enshrouds every aspect of our environment.

The cities of America are possibly even more finite in their associations than those of Europe, and European artists continually attempt to reinvigorate the intermediaries upon which they rely. Even so, the city-made art of Europe—cubism, futurism, *tâchisme*—is remarkably pulverised. The amorphous or disrupted image is something taken for granted in modern art. The clear image is exclusive to naïve art (including social realism) and art with a considerable degree of fantasy. Only by pulverising his image can the modern artist make it "tragic and timeless." So pulverised was Pollock's image, however, that it was neither tragic nor timeless. The reason for this is found in the extreme passivity behind his use of automatism.

Those surrealists who used automatism, shortcut the creative process by eliminating the visualised image. Instead of examining the image before making it, they blurt it out, giving themselves time neither to change the image nor even to ask the point of it. The intrusion of a personal will and rational system of thinking would interrupt the flow from one image to the next. Automatism's descent is from romantic spontaneity by way of the "deliberate derangement of the senses." The artist disposes himself passively so that he can move in step with a rhythm. He is a medium only, the image forms itself. Tragic art, on the other hand, is the outcome of a clash between a heroic individual will and a more powerful force. It is timeless if it repeats the pattern of a perennial contest. The tragic hero knows that he can't really win. Tragic art is produced by an artist who though he realises that all forms will certainly be obliterated by new ones is nevertheless driven by an inner compulsion to impose his will through new forms. He resists the historical process. Pollock simply held up a mirror to it. He was like a wit who moves into a circle of embarrassment and turns it toppling to his advantage. It was his taste for a position of extreme instability that gave strength to his work.

Jackson Pollock was killed on August 11th this year while motoring at speed near Southampton, N.Y. with two companions. His car shot off the road and hit a tree.

Victor Willing

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Move On!

JOHN BUNYAN the Tinker, or as some say the Gypsy (metal-work is an old gypsy craft), for he describes himself, if I remember right, as belonging to an "outlandish and despised people," spent a good deal of his time in gaol for airing religious views then unpopular with the authorities. Being literate, he was able to occupy his enforced leisure in writing the immortal works we so much admire today.

Ordinary gypsies cannot for the most part read or write, and, nomads by tradition and upbringing, are accustomed to gain a living while moving about the country with their horses, tents, and wagons. Devoted to this way of life, they more than other people are likely to find the discipline of imprisonment both irksome and unrewarding (to put it mildly); but their petty misdemeanours hardly call for great severity. Criminality is rare among them.

Now and for some years, however, a new drive against the gypsies has been in operation in the southern and some other counties of England, with the aim, apparently, of exterminating "these anti-social pests," as they were described by Nazi Germany. Although this policy may not include the summary methods of Himmler; although the Indo-Aryan "hedge-crawlers" (to use another Nazi epithet) are not caught and gassed outright as if they were Jews, the treatment adopted will prove no less lethal in the long run. Harried into the slums of our big towns or the "ground-worm" infested filth of New Forest concentration camps, they are condemned to squalor, disease, and degradation. Freedom being their one and only political concept, these incorrigible conservatives are strangers to the ballot box (but not to the recruiting officer), and are thus overlooked by the Welfare State. If some of the better-off ones are persuaded to make use of "council houses," such recreants have been known, disconcertingly, to repay conversion by setting up their tent in the garden, while according the amenities of the house to their animals.

Francis Hindes Groome, who was an eminent gypsy scholar of a past generation, wrote as follows (I quote from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*):

"The better sort of Gypsies are quick witted, courteous, likeable and trustworthy when trusted. Untrammelled by prejudices and vexed by no lofty ambition, they have picked up a sort of peripatetic philosophy, lead a pleasant cuckoo-like existence and make the best of life."

"Great criminals are few among them."

"The best gypsy is the gypsy *au naturel*, the life-long dweller in country lanes; and he like all *feræ naturæ*, is threatened with extinction. Gypsies' virtues are largely their own, an outcome of open-air life; their vices are ascribable to centuries of oppression, which has left them a singular compound of deep-seated gloom and quick-silver lightheartedness, and has made them suspicious and hostile towards the rest of mankind."

One may add that the last-mentioned attitude is fully reciprocated by the majority referred to, though without similar warrant. Having quoted an excellent, though no longer quite contemporary authority, I now add a letter from a living gypsy I have recently received:

"Dear Sir,

As a caravan dweller I read in to-day's *News Chronicle* with much interest and pleased to think someone has a feeling for Romany and his cattle. I for one no what it is to be moved on. Ordenary Folk grumble at next to nothing. But had they to put up with the life of a Gypsy Im sure they would think again. Ive no need to tell you what a Gypsy and his horse has to go through, you must already know. Some Folk may say why does he have to put up with it. Why dont they come off the Road and live in houses and work in a factory. Well it would be like taking a wild Bird and putting it in a cage.

E. E. Smith, Caravan, Little Bookham, Surrey."

If asked what it is that has fascinated some people in gypsies (a fascination which is incurable), I might allude to their physical comeliness, their pleasant manners, their fastidiousness, their ready wit and gaiety, their essential honesty even when combined with wild prevarication, their love of children, their exotic language and

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primitive taboos; all these I might mention and still leave unexplained a mysterious something of which I do not know the name, but which I recognise with a thrill from a mile off.

But wandering gypsies (though always wandering with a purpose) are not everybody's fancy. The grocers of Kent have now adopted the precaution of pasting up the notice over their shops, "*No Gipsies served here.*" This sweeping discriminatory generalisation, coming from a class of strictly uncreative middlemen popularly known for their practice of mixing sand with the sugar surprises us in this country (while on the Continent the designation "*épicier*" is but rarely understood as a compliment), moved me lately to send a letter of protest to *The Times*, resulting in a flood of highly sympathetic expressions of opinion from friends of the gypsies all over the country, with only one dissident, a correspondent whose communication was both abusive and anonymous.

Without the testimony of gypsy scholars the world over, these letters prove that among ordinary people there are not a few who have found themselves well repaid by friendly contact with the dark strangers in our midst once the attitude of suspicion and hostility, induced by ages of ignorant persecution, has been replaced by the *bonhomie* and merriment more natural to them as to other children. For gypsies never quite grow up. They remain naïve and transparent even in their humbug and should have no difficulty in entering when the time comes into that Kingdom promised by another wanderer, who like them was not exactly *persona grata* with the Authorities nor, one may add, connected with Big Business, in Kent or anywhere else. Long before the age of myxomatosis, the gypsies (and others) did their share in reducing our superfluity of rabbits, though at some risk, and one wonders by what means they have replaced this popular and important item in the poor-man's larder. Hedgehogs, I know, are only at their best in the autumn, and the gypsy is a fastidious eater. Doubtless the grey squirrel will to some extent fill the gap, being a proven delicacy, with, in addition, a bonus attached to every tail, and of course there are always the medicinal and fortifying properties of *turro zimin* or snail soup, to be had for nothing. But if the worst comes to the worst, there is always The *Bâro Hoxipen* or Big Trick to fall back upon. Credulity at any rate is inexhaustible, thank goodness.

Those of us who believe in liberty and welcome human diversity must surely stand up for a small and politically powerless people from the East, who have made themselves at home here and enlivened and ornamented our countryside since the 15th century, while for the most part preserving their racial integrity, their traditional customs, and even in parts their ancient language, in a usually hostile world: but it is a world they love and flourish in if left to their own devices and a way of life, which is now imitated by hosts of highly respectable holiday-makers; so there must be something in it! In any case, before condemning these people out-of-hand, it would be as well to make their acquaintance. This may take some time and trouble, but with goodwill and good manners it may be worth while and even rewarding for such as have a taste for human nature and no axe to grind. But perhaps the first thing is to discover who is responsible for the present vicious revival of Bumbledom and the cult of uniformity.

AUGUSTUS JOHN, O.M., R.A., LL.D.
President, The Gypsy Lore Society

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Two Poems by Richard Selig

ORESTES

WHAT grave at midnight opens, what prophecy comes true,
What dark mouth opening under a bare bough?
The long lean tomb of a tall man, taller than life,
Of Agamemnon's son whose glory, stained on a knife,
Still shines with crime's renewal, Abel's death, your wish.
Those ancient bones will tell you: feeble was the leash
Tethering the righteous man from the unrighteous act.
What law his mind was tethered to, his heart had lacked.

Cassandra saw and prophesied: beneath the friendly mask
Lay the king's death, the queen's lust, the lover's obscene risk.
Mycenae's stone received the blunt fall of heads
And choking streams of blood, but never any sorrow sheds;
For witnessing such crimes cannot disturb its sleep.

Yet stones can dream, blood can dry, and mortal reap
From dreaming stone the shattered moment of his death.
Because the good Orestes came—straight as youth
Seeks out its noblest aptitude—to find the dark house
That bred him, he doomed his strength into a bitter cause.

Step by step the story when retold retells
How peace is paid for crime by crime. Blood falls
Repeatedly in seasons: history is one great year
In which a liturgy of violent acts, deep fear,
Wronged innocence recurs as do the seasons' storms
And man is never safe from harms and doing harm.

A VOYAGE

BEGINNING another, stranger voyage, stars shook
From sails. The water eased against my skin.
Shawled in wind and salt I took the last look
At what I was: wine-dark, dark as blood as wine.

With wind for courage, water salty as my tears,
I gave to grief its due and drowned it with my going.
Because the land, too still, too slow and full of fears,
Was out of sight, I sank unsteady roots, began my growing

There, in a feminine, indifferent element
Where nothing seems to change and nothing stays.
Accepting all the moods of heaven, kind or violent,
She held and pleasured me upon unquiet thighs.

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BOOKS

"A Condition of Mere Nature"

"INTERNATIONAL Relations" as an academic discipline, Professor Arnold Wolfers of Yale notes in introducing a curious anthology,* was born of the idealism of World War One, and particularly of the fervour for a League of Nations that would encompass the family of man in a happy communion. This idealism was itself a union of two incompatible blood-types: on the one hand, a humanist universalism that verged on the utopian; on the other, a doctrinaire liberalism that celebrated the natural right to self-determination, nationhood, sovereignty, and similar appetising things. These rights being asserted, they inevitably clashed, and instead of being in utopia we were back in a "condition of mere nature" (Hobbes) where man wars against every man; and the nations which made up the League began gobbling one another up.

It is not surprising, then, that "International Relations" was sickening from the start, and that it has passed most of its days in an iron lung, i.e. the university. There, it is fed with the leavings from History's high table ("Rumanian-Bolivian Relations, 1877–1904") and Sociology's low one ("Psychological Tensions and International Concord in the Near East"), while trying to make itself more or less useful by tutoring young people in the ways and wiles of statesmen. What it has to teach is what a maiden aunt will tell her innocent young niece who is going off to live in the big city. Such advice, whether puritanical or prurient in tone, ought not to be lightly scorned; but it is of relatively little help when the lights go out, memory fails, and there is only strength of character and native cunning to fall back on.

In international affairs the lights are always going out, which is perhaps one of the reasons this anthology makes such dim reading. Of what use is it to know that Sir Thomas More lists five kinds of just war in his *Utopia*—especially when they add up to nothing more than that a just war is one entered with clear conscience, and after prudent calculation? The pronouncements on foreign affairs of More, Bacon, Locke, Godwin, Burke, Hamilton, *et al* are important clues for any analysis of their political philosophies. But aside from exposing students to good prose and fine minds, and supplying journalists with a convenient stock of quotations (both good things in themselves, to be sure), the fragments in this book can offer little knowledge about, or insight into, foreign affairs. Selections from diplomatic memoirs would have been far more to the point. For these political philosophers were, in foreign affairs, as much the sport of circumstance, as much bound over to Necessity, as the sovereigns and statesmen they presumed to advise. Their generalisations are generalities, the commonplaces of worldly wisdom; while they do not provide us with any specific analyses of concrete, temporal problems from which one might learn, if only obliquely and analogically, how to get along and ahead.

IS THERE, moreover, a definable Anglo-American tradition in foreign affairs, as the title of this book claims? No one had ever noticed it up to now, and it is most improbable that it had been simply overlooked. It is true that, on the whole, English and American thinkers on politics have been slightly less "machiavellian" and more moralistic in their style of thought than their European counterparts. But, as Professor Wolfers himself points out, this was the result of the geographical insularity of the English-speaking peoples, which endowed them with a greater range of choice in their actions. Even the most "machiavellian" of Continental thinkers (including Machiavelli himself) allowed that geographical luck was one way of escaping from the iron laws of policy they laid down. And in any case, this accident

* *The Anglo-American Tradition in Foreign Affairs*. Readings from Thomas More to Woodrow Wilson. Edited with an introduction and commentary by ARNOLD WOLFERS and LAWRENCE W. MARTIN. Yale University Press. London: Cumberlege. 36s.

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of geography has long since been cancelled out by other accidents of technology. The basic fact is that we are all "machiavellians" when it comes to foreign affairs, and have been so since the dawn of the modern era. Nor was this a matter either of original sin or spiritual deviation. When states exist in a condition of mere nature, there is no alternative available to us.

Medieval Christendom assumed that all men (Christian men, anyway) were members of one community, and that this community was under the judgment, not only of a common God, but of a common law as well. But the medieval ideal was doomed to defeat since (1) most of the world wasn't Christian, (2) nor were most of the Christians. With the "revival of learning" and the rise of secular monarchies—these being but two aspects of the same great transformation—the state of nature was frankly acknowledged as natural for nations, if not for men; so natural, that medieval thought was dismissed *in toto* as clerical hypocrisy (which, in all fairness, it was only in part).

Once the idea of a unified Christendom was discarded, however, we were back with the Greeks and Romans in a situation where all that could be said about foreign affairs in general had already been said in the Iliad:

> *And perhaps one day in Argos you will weave cloth for another,*
> *And the Messeian or Hyperian water you will fetch*
> *Much against your will, yielding to harsh necessity.*

What could political philosophers, *as philosophers*, add to this? They might indulge in utopian daydreams; or they might try to make, not only a virtue out of necessity, but a philosophy as well. Most, aiming to be useful, chose to do the latter. So Francis Bacon, having reproached the older scholastic philosophers with being "fitter to guide penknives than swords," urged philosophers in matters politic to kneel before Necessity, which he humbly saluted as "the great god of the powerful." At about the same time, the Catholic casuist, Molina, was establishing the modern Church doctrine (as against St. Thomas) that war could be just on *both* sides, when the two parties were persuaded of the "probability" of their rightness. This line of thought quickly leads to a philosophical dead end; which is why practically all modern political philosophers, whatever the richness and profundity of their thought, have been transformed into more or less clever, more or less wise, casuists and pamphleteers when it comes to foreign affairs. Where choice is entirely dictated by the contingency of events, where ideals must always give way before the struggle to survive,

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moral questions are converted into problems of expediency: what one ought to do becomes identical with what one had better do under the circumstances. One would have thought that to eliminate the distinction between expedience and righteousness was an activity hardly in need of philosophers; but their voluntary work was, naturally enough, much appreciated in the highest quarters.

Nevertheless, despite the joint efforts of political philosophers and politicians, there seems to be an irrepressible sentiment, a kind of indefinite but ineradicable nostalgia, which forbids us to accept the "condition of mere nature" as being what nature really intended. And, after all, might not Hobbes' myth of the origin of a pacifying sovereignty, which reconciled the claims of men and redeemed them from a state of perpetual war, apply literally to the future of nations? Under the shadow of mutual extermination, the antagonists will be seized with fear for their lives, overcome their vanity and shame, and recognise that they have a common enemy: death. Then and only then will it be possible to disentangle political philosophy from the bondage of political necessity. Leviathan will still exist; he will still demand sacrifices; but we shall have ceased to idolise him.

Irving Kristol

A SMALL GREEN INSECT SHELTERS IN THE BOWELS OF MY QUIVERING TYPEWRITER

NOBODY who has read the correspondence columns of the English literary periodicals over the past three or four years can possibly be unaware that we are in the presence of an impalpable and ambiguous phenomenon generally referred to as "The Movement," whose existence is affirmed and disavowed—sometimes in consecutive sentences—by its adherents, victims, and bandwagon-masters. It all began, so far as I remember, with some young provincial dons exclaiming at the iniquity of the London literary racket in the tone of awed horror that Sunday papers adopt in those articles they have about the razor gangs and street women of Soho. Almost simultaneously—at the drop, as it were, of a cocktail glass—the voices of these same young were heard wafted on Third Programmes, their verse and opinions presented weekly on Fridays and Sundays in the booksy periodicals and newspapers, while the London critics mustered their most impressive jargon to inform the nation in leading articles that a poetic renaissance unparalleled since the thirties was at hand. A brace of novels was greeted with wild cheering and references to Tobias Smollett. In no time whatsoever the London literary racket, if it ever existed, was bust wide open. There hadn't been anything like it since Mr. Deeds came to town.

Time has passed and it is perhaps possible as well as permissible now to begin to assess the Movement's achievement in the field of contemporary verse. I propose to review—*en lump* so to speak—the four individual books of poems I have before me, plus Mr. Robert Conquest's anthology of nine poets,* all by writers belonging, or considered to belong, to the new dispensation. As to what this may be, I refer to Mr. Conquest's introduction to his anthology: "The most important general point would be that it submits to no great systems of theoretical constructs nor agglomerations of unconscious commands." Um.

IT MIGHT be easy to make fun of this kind of pomposity and of the prose that sustains it —the sort of prose which George Orwell (the late espoused saint of the new writers on account of his "principle of real, rather than ideological, honesty") damned. But it is necessary to follow Mr. Conquest's argument. According to him, the poetry typical of the last decade or two (or maybe three, for Mr. Conquest is a little difficult to pin down) was "an arrangement of images of sex and violence tapped straight from the unconscious (a sort of upper-middlebrow equivalent of the horror-comic)" when it was not evoking "without comment, the *naïvetés* and nostalgias of childhood." (This seems a quite fair description of some of the worst verse of the forties.) "To combat this trend," Mr. Conquest goes on,

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* *The Less Deceived*. By PHILIP LARKIN. The Marvell Press. 6s.

Brides of Reason. By DONALD DAVIE. Fantasy Press.

A Word Carved on a Sill. By JOHN WAIN. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 10s. 6d.

Bread Rather than Blossoms. By D. J. ENRIGHT. Secker and Warburg. 10s. 6d.

New Lines. An Anthology edited by ROBERT CONQUEST. Macmillan. 12s. 6d.

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"was not a purely artistic task. When a condition of this sort takes hold it sometimes lasts for decades. The writers remembered later are the odd eccentrics—the Kiplings and the Hardys. But even such individuals cannot correct a mood: that requires a general tendency, perhaps of lesser talents." Such a tendency, explains Mr. Conquest, has been under way since the late 1940's, when "a number of poets began to emerge who have been progressing from different viewpoints to a certain unity of approach, a new and healthy general standpoint." These poets—according to the contents list of Mr. Conquest's anthology—include Elizabeth Jennings, John Holloway, Philip Larkin, Thom Gunn, Kingsley Amis, D. J. Enright, Donald Davie, Robert Conquest, and John Wain. (Is it irrelevant to note that of these nine, six are or were university lecturers, two librarians in provincial cities?) "What they do have in common is perhaps, at its lowest, little more than a negative determination to avoid bad principles. By itself that cannot guarantee good poetry." (This strikes me as handsome, but let Mr. Conquest continue his story.) "The most glaring fault awaiting correction when the new period opened was the omission of the necessary intellectual component from poetry. It cannot be denied that this has led, to some extent, to a tendency to over-intellectualise. Some years ago Mr. Wain advocated the methods of Mr. William Empson in poetry. . . . At least the Empsonian fashion is an improvement on its predecessors—in reading the poorer five-finger exercises one is always consoled by the thought of how much worse they used to be when other less restrained styles were in vogue."

In examining Mr. Conquest's manifesto—if manifesto be not too explicit a term—one cannot help being struck by its hesitating vagueness and extraordinarily negative attitude. The Movement, it implies, is "a general tendency, perhaps of lesser talents" whose task, apparently, is to rescue the obvious from the unconscious. These "lesser talents" are united in a "negative determination to avoid bad principles." While, as Mr. Conquest admits, this "cannot guarantee good poetry," he points happily to the fact that bad pre-Movement poetry was very, very bad, but the bad poetry of the new school is less bad. It is a remarkable argument, but, when one comes to the verse of the writers in Mr. Conquest's anthology, explains a lot. No one there seems to be trying to write a good poem so much as a not-bad poem. The general effect is that of a cricket eleven concentrating on not getting out rather than risk wickets by attempting to score. And the attitude to living which these poems adumbrate is exactly similar. It is the policy of playing safe.

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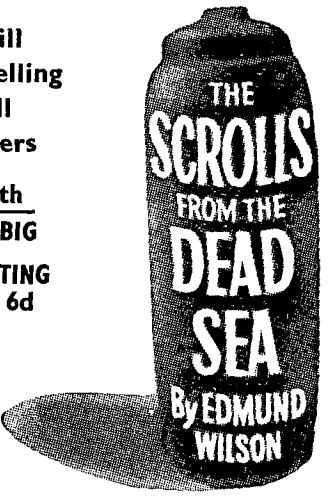

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HERE, for instance, are some verses by Mr. Philip Larkin, perhaps the most technically competent as he is at the moment the most widely acclaimed of Mr. Conquest's protégés, which seem to me not only to illustrate my assertion but to describe with accuracy the poetic ideal aimed at by the entire Movement. They come from a poem addressed to the infant daughter of a friend:

May you be ordinary
Have, like other women,
An average of talents:
Not ugly, not good-looking,
Nothing uncustomary
To pull you off your balance,
That, unworkable itself,
Stops all the rest from working.
In fact, may you be dull—
If that is what a skilled
Vigilant, flexible,
Unemphasised, enthralled
Catching of happiness is called.

This stance is almost exactly matched by Mr. Donald Davie in a poem from his book, *Brides of Reason*:

Oh, I can praise a cloistered virtue, such
As knows it cannot praise itself too much;

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That though innate corruption breaks the laws,
Woman, for instance, is the efficient cause.
The genuine prayer, when all is said and done,
Is, "Lead us not into temptation."

Such timid glances at the risky business of being alive are also paralleled, in a curious way, in the verse-forms they favour (the *villanelle*, for instance, which looks difficult but is really very easy to construct, especially in worn-out five-foot iambs) and in the satiric verse which they occasionally attempt. Dead issues and dead ducks are valiantly belaboured (it is significant that a novel by the poet Mr. John Wain, published in 1955, had for villain that antiquated yo-yo, a British Fascist!). Take for example Mr. Kingsley Amis being ironic about women's poetry:

Should poets bicycle-pump the human heart
Or squash it flat?
Man's love is of man's life a thing apart;
Girls aren't like that.

We men have got love well weighed up; our stuff
Can get by without it.
Women don't seem to think that's good enough;
They write about it.

And the awful way their poems lay them open
Just doesn't strike them.
Women are really much nicer than men:
No wonder we like them.

Deciding this, we can forget those times
We sat up half the night
Chock-full of love, crammed with bright
thoughts, names, rhymes,
And couldn't write.

The Thracian women are hardly likely to tear Mr. Amis into pieces on this account. As a sample of the intellectual component hitherto absent from poetry this kind of wit is perhaps jejune, perhaps a bit too much like those whimsy essayicles with a pay-off in the last sentence that the late A. A. Milne used to do so well for pre-Muggeridge *Punch*.

IT IS because one has to consider the reiterated and inflationary claims made by not only Mr. Conquest but nearly everyone else for this kind of thing that I am driven to re-bellow Mr. Amis's *cri-de-cœur*: "The awful way their poems lay them open just doesn't strike them!" For if much of the verse of the forties was muddled, confused, sentimental, muse-happy, and plain haywire, parallel accusations are to be levelled at the verse before me here. At least, in the old days there was the theory that in order to write poetry you had to be a poet first: the idea may seem a bit simple-minded but so is the current hallucination that a poem ought to be rather like an alpha-plus answer to a question set in an English tripos. I am not expert at estimating the various degrees of badness in bad poetry. But I will commit myself to the assertion that the bad poetry of the thirties and forties is no worse and no better than the bad poetry of the fifties, and that just as much bad poetry is being written now as ever was. It's not a question of a change of style or theory or tone or manner or an avoidance of bad principles: for the simple reason that if you dress up a sheep in a wolf's skin, or in the hide of the ten-horned beast of the apocalypse, or even a mortar-board and a pair of glasses, the sheep is still a sheep, as you can easily tell by listening to the bleat. Three examples:

I hope to feel some pity when the knife
Plunges at last into the world's sick heart
And stills its pounding and its seething strife.
(John Wain)

The wonderful feel of girls. Why be out here?
But then, why be in there? Sex, yes, but what
Is sex?
(Philip Larkin)

A small green insect shelters in the bowels of my
quivering typewriter—
Good reason for me to call a halt.
(D. J. Enright)

The first specimen is extraordinarily mawkish. Need one indicate the poverty of its sentimental, thrice-hackneyed diction and imagery? Although the lines come from a poem about the atom bomb they might easily be the work of any nineties versifier. The other two examples are simply funny, and as stuffed-owlish as anything produced by pre-Movement verse-writers: they seem the result of a lack of a sense of humour, which is the conscience of poets, as Roy Campbell once pointed out.

BUT it is the better work that must be attended to. I have already indicated the frightened, welfare-state mentality most Movement verse seems to express. It has another distinguishing common attitude that I find depressing. It is an attitude of positively enormous resentment, very like that of the Teddy-boy, or of a child who, having been unjustly spanked, is taken to the Zoo for a treat but gets his own back by refusing to enjoy himself. It comes out very clearly in the verse of Mr. Philip Larkin, especially in his poem "I Remember, I Remember" which concerns his emotions at seeing his birthplace (Coventry) from a railway train. In the poem he reflects that this was where his "childhood was unspent" and catalogues all he never had in infancy and adolescence. What he didn't have was not, as you might think, enough love or money or education or anything serious like that, but simply the kind of childhood he read about in second-rate sentimental novels.

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I'll show you, come to that,
The bracken where I never trembling sat,
Determined to go through with it; where she
Lay back, and "all became a burning mist."
And, in those offices, my doggerel
Was not set up in blunt ten-point, nor read
By a distinguished cousin of the mayor,

Who didn't call and tell my father There
Before us, had we the gift to see ahead—
"You look as though you wished the place in Hell,"
My friend said, "judging from your face." "Oh well,
I suppose it's not the place's fault," I said.

Compare this with some verses from a poem on a similar theme by one of the muddle-headed 'forties poets:

Now I know what was wanting in my youth,
It was not water or a loving mouth . . .
It was hard cash I needed at my root.
I now know that how I grew was due
To echoing guts and the empty bag—
My song was out of tune for a few notes.

One of the two is making a valid statement, and the other airing a frivolous and irrelevant grievance.

Mr. Larkin's book of poems has already gone into three editions, and recently won a full-page panegyric from the *Times Educational* (!) *Supplement* which acclaimed it as "a poetic monument that marks the triumph of clarity over the formless mystifications of the last twenty years. With Larkin poetry is on the way back to the middle-brow public." Or as Ezra Pound remarked of a poet laureate forty years ago, "He will appeal to lots of people who don't like poetry but who like to think they like poetry." For what Mr. Larkin, Mr. Wain, and Mr. Amis and the others are offering the public is not a vision, poetic or even personal, of the world we live in, but flattery. They adulate the mediocre. How comfortable it is to most of us to hear Mr. Larkin exclaim:

Ah, were I courageous enough
To shout, Stuff your pension!
But I know, all too well, that's the stuff
That dreams are made on:

For something sufficiently toad-like
Squats in me, too:
Its hunkers are heavy as hard luck
And cold as snow . . .

Well, well. Let me wind up this monstrously unfair attack on the Movement (I find I have said nothing specific about the verses of Mr. D. J. Enright for instance, so here goes—they're

Wyndham Lewis

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all about Japan and remind me of bamboo furniture) with a couple of salutary quotations:

If one is going to print opinions that the public already agrees with, what is the use of printing 'em at all?

(Ezra Pound)

Where, where, but here have Pride and Truth,
That long to give themselves for wage,
To shake their wicked sides at youth
Restraining reckless middle-age?

(W. B. Yeats)

David Wright

THE NEW TRANSIGENCE

An American friend of mine grew tired of the complaints of his teen-age daughter—half-boastful complaints—that her generation faced more problems, and more intractable and novel ones, than any previous generation since time—or at any rate *Time*—began. Finally he challenged her to name any problem that was unique to her generation. She claimed the atom-bomb and the H-bomb: he insisted that his generation had a line on these. She cited the rising of the coloured peoples: he likewise maintained that an older generation partook of that problem. Then she said, "How about *progressive parents*? You never had that to deal with." He could not think of a convincing answer.

Progress is still a well-favoured word in America: *progressive*, and all that it implies, is not. It consorts uneasily in a half-world with words like *radicalism* and *freethinker*. These are the follies of the past—indeed, in the eyes of a large number of Americans, the treasons of the past. They have become tainted, almost as words like *liberate* and *fraternise* did in the Europe of a dozen years ago. This means that a large number of other Americans are on the defensive. Like the teen-ager's father, they have no comeback. What they sometimes deplore as the New Conformity has them on the run, because they themselves are blown by the prevailing wind. It is not an especially strong wind, nor exactly a mellow breeze. What we also hear of as the New Conservatism is not professed by multitudes. A rather self-conscious and inchoate development, it is a movement that is hostile to movement, with neither leaders nor followers, but only publicists at various levels of intellectual respectability. There is a good deal of bad temper in present-day America; and in part the New Conformity—or the New Transigence, as we might label it—represents a gambit in the unending and acid warfare of the generations. According to this, the rule that whatever is is right lies subsidiary to the rule that whatever was was wrong.

Nevertheless, the New Transigence goes further than the mere customary devaluation-revaluation process of the generations. That pattern is still evident: the latest generation is busy despising (and not reading—one only has time for a few books) what its parents read. But there is a deeper desire for cosiness. True, America has a periodical entitled *Dissent* that offers to take on all comers in the belief that a yea-sayer is necessarily a yes-man. But it does not arouse much stir. The critics cry for "affirmations." What is more, they get them.

A little while back they were offered Herman Wouk's *Marjorie Morningstar*, in which the heroine, a pretty Jewish girl with Bohemian hankerings, at length makes a safe marriage with a businessman of the same faith, and subsides contentedly into life as a suburban matron. Marjorie has learned that intellectuals are—in more senses than one—god-forsaken creatures. The author manœuvres her back into the fold like an indulgent but skilful sheepdog. *Marjorie Morningstar*, a sort of latter-day *Pamela*, stood high on the American best-seller lists. It would have been in appropriate enough company with a current non-fiction best-seller called *Love or Perish*, the work of a man with the enchanting name of Dr. Smiley Blanton.

And it has a certain kinship with another novel, *The Last Hurrah*,* which has enjoyed an even greater success in America. Deservedly: it is extremely good of its kind, readable, competent in construction, literate, and humane in feeling. The minor characters are excellent. The story is funny in some places and touching in others. Its main character, Frank Skeffington, is an old-style Irish political boss, in a city that sounds like Boston. He is mayor, and at the age of seventy-two he is running for re-election. His power has been built out of graft, most of his cronies are moronic; and so you might think it a happy outcome when he is defeated by a reforming opponent. Not so: Frank Skeffington is portrayed as a kind of superior Robin Hood. His corrupt ways are gossiped about, yet nothing serious is proved against him. Never pompous

* *The Last Hurrah.* By Edwin O'Connor. Reinhardt. 18s.

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except when he means to be, tongue-in-cheek, he is all charm, agility, and sophistication.

There are several things to note about *The Last Hurrah*, quite apart from its value as entertainment. One is that it is not a "minority" novel, though it is by an Irish-American and about Irish-Americans: it neither complains nor apologises. The obsessive passion that you still find in most novels by say, American Negroes, is lacking here. There is an equanimity about it, as of a situation defined and accepted. The Irish have fallen into place; the city-boss moves offstage into folklore, perhaps to join Sitting Bull and Geronimo as a wild man whose virtues can be acknowledged—and exaggerated—now that he is safely dead and gone. Like other American novelists, indeed, Mr. O'Connor is half a myth-maker and half a sociologist. The truth of this is amusingly portrayed in the behaviour of Mayor Curley of Boston, an actual man whom most people have been regarding as the prototype of Skeffington. Mayor Curley apparently held the same view, and there were reports that he intended to sue Mr. O'Connor. But *The Last Hurrah* was too benign to merit such treatment. Skeffington became confused with Curley, so that over 160 Boston voters wrote the name of Skeffington into their tickets in a recent primary election—and Mayor Curley claimed them for his own. How many cheers or hurrahs is this for democracy?

ANOTHER fascinating analysis of the New Transigence (which Mr. O'Connor, incidentally, describes as "the new emotional shallows") is provided by *The Public Arts*.* Its author, Gilbert Seldes, is an unusual man who has made a long and honourable career as an interpreter of such "popular" media as the cinema, radio, and television. It is these three that he discusses in *The Public Arts*. He manages to do so with affectionate sympathy yet without undue jollity. He knows their dangers and he does not pretend that they constitute a new kind of university destined to ennoble us all:

TV Guide noted that the comedian Orson Bean began a broadcast with this offer:

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TV Guide also reported that people wrote in quite seriously for each of the gifts.

But on the whole Mr. Seldes is optimistic. He urges his readers to overcome their dislike of the

* *The Public Arts*. By GILBERT SELDES. Simon and Schuster. $3.95.

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public arts, but he is not proposing to lead them in a crusade. In common with Jacques Barzun,* who writes in similar terms of the rôle of music —a most pervasive one—in American life, he is seemingly ready to accept the fact that the public arts, and the gramophone, owe some of their sway to "an increasing resistance to words." Here the New Transigence does frighten me a little. Is word-purveying, save as an elementary exercise, to become an obsolete craft, like cottage weaving or the manufacture of cigarettes? *Je n'en vois pas la nécessité*, as the lady said about death. There is something a little eerie in working through a batch of books on contemporary America, perhaps because they are so contemporary that they whirl one onward in a time-machine, overhauling the future; for in practice living in the present means trying to live in the future.

ALL such fears are allayed by Mr. Dingwall,† whose book brings a whiff of Europe and the past. His theme is American women, their sad history of frustration and frigidity and their disastrous effect upon American civilisation. His story is not without merit; he has culled a mass of evidence, some of it from reputable witnesses, and there is no doubt that he has a point. But it is a curiously old-fashioned point; and even though many of his sources are American, I think it is mainly a European point, all about the American dreadfulness and the need for Americans to relax and fecundate. Has he not heard of the new dispensations? His is an America whose denizens are still saying *sez you?* and *twenty-three skiddoo* to one another. I can find no mention in *The American Woman*—which has thousands of citations—of the writings of David Riesman, or Erich Fromm, or anything by Karen Horney since 1926, or of Margaret Mead's *Male and Female*. By way of compensation, there are copious references to such publications as *Esquire*, to Philip ("Mom") Wylie, and to a horde of daft or superficial European observers. Stephen Leacock remarks that half-truths, like half-bricks, go further in argument; if so, Mr. Dingwall will meet with a lively reception.

Marcus Cunliffe

* *Music in American Life*. By JACQUES BARZUN. Doubleday. $2.75.

† *The American Woman*. By ERIC JOHN DINGWALL. Duckworth. 25s.

A.D. 1956

IN TIMES of disillusion and danger a secular society requires a patient but active courage from its leading citizens if it is to have much chance of survival. Its corrosive enemies are anxiety, frightened impatience, and the neurotic boredom and apathy which frequently attend such states of excitement. Contemporary Western secular civilisation in its present perilous situation seems to be seriously threatened from within by exactly such neurotic reactions, though the extent of this destructive response may be less than it appears, for alarm is necessarily more vocal than patient courage. While many of the Western intellectuals who plead for a return to religion do so because, after mature consideration, they believe that in both religious instinct and in the organised religions lie the only possible solutions to the dilemmas of modern civilisation, many also—and these again probably the most vocal—see in religion an escape from their panic. Dr. Toynbee's new book* will give genuine satisfaction to the former class; it will also no doubt have fashionable success among the latter.

Dr. Toynbee starts his argument from the inner contradiction that dwells in men. Each man is inevitably self-centred. If he does not preserve this self-centredness, he will inevitably seek extinction. If he remains self-centred, he will also perish—for this self-centredness is a palpable and absurd illusion. From this contradiction come sorrow and anxiety. The reality of religion allows man to accept this contradiction and to endure sorrow. Each man has his own approach to this reality, Dr. Toynbee declares, but he suggests that the historian's approach may be of a special interest, because the very pursuit of historical studies shows a peculiar desire to escape from self-centredness in time. He agrees, of course, that in practice historians do not wholly succeed in escaping from their own personalities, or from their own time, in their search to understand the past. He cites here the limitations of Gibbon and we may note that he could not have chosen an historian whose limitations are more convenient for his thesis. Indeed I cannot help thinking that the whole of Dr. Toynbee's argument would have been strengthened if he had attempted some self-analysis, some suggestion of the connections between his own view of history and his personality

* *An Historian's Approach to Religion*. By ARNOLD TOYNBEE. Oxford University Press. 21s.

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and place in time. This, however, is only part of a general defect in Dr. Toynbee's book to which I shall return later in the review.

THE nature of the religious instinct and the peculiar qualifications of the historian to discuss it established, Dr. Toynbee proceeds to an account of how man has approached religion throughout history. His thesis here will be familiar to readers of *A Study of History*, of which it is avowedly a selection and enlargement of the sections relating to religion. Man's first worship is of nature, the world outside him. Human conquest of nature—so late in time when seen against the whole history of man, so remote from us—lends to the replacement of the worship of nature by man-worship, the considerable variety of anthropomorphic religions. This in turn, by its failure to resolve the inner contradiction—particularly the problem of sorrow—from which man's religious instinct derives, gives place to the higher religions, in which man turns his reverence to absolute reality. The higher religions arise late in man's history. This cycle is to be observed at different times in progress in different parts of the world. Finally, through certain external stresses and inner weaknesses, the higher religions ceased to hold man's allegiance, and the cycle has been repeated in the modern world.

The major part of Dr. Toynbee's historical analysis is given to two aspects of this cycle: the forms man-worship has taken and the causes of the decline of the higher religion. It is upon these that he bases his analysis of the contemporary world and seeks avoidance of future decay of religion. The earliest form of anthropomorphism—passing usually from polytheism to monotheism—finds its expression in what he calls the Idolisation of Parochial Communities: the Ancient Near Eastern Kingdoms, the Great City States, the Roman Republic, the Modern Nation States. This worship leads inevitably to war, destruction, and chaos. A solution is then found in the worship of the Oecumenical State: the Chinese Empire, the Roman Empire. Contemporary with this phase there is usually some allegiance to man as a self-sufficient philosopher: Socrates and the Greek philosophers, Confucius, the modern technician. In Marcus Aurelius we see an attempt to arrest the decline of an Oecumenical Community by combining its worship with idolisation of the philosopher. Of these philosopher cults, only Confucianism has had any enduring success. The Oecumenical Community inevitably collapses through bureaucratic government, growing lack of enthusiasm, and general insufficient incentive. (Here, Dr. Toynbee follows the post-Rostovtzeff analysis of the Roman Empire.) It is then that man turns to absolute reality in despair and the higher religion comes into its own. This transfer of allegiance comes from below, from the depressed masses, for the disillusioned ruling classes try vainly to pursue the philosopher cults. Western civilisation is now at the crisis of the Parochial stage with only two powerful nation states—America and Russia—left in the field. We may confidently expect that as a result of war or agreement this conflict will be resolved and an Oecumenical State will succeed; and this time, because of changed geography, that State will be a true world State. The worship of the World State will in its turn no doubt collapse and man shows signs already of seeking reality in religion. It is therefore of the greatest urgency that the higher religion which will command his devotion should not once again fail him.

Higher religions have previously declined because of certain internal changes that came about as a result of their acquiring wide allegiance. They have lost their spirituality in mundane tasks. They have tended to demand worship for the Church as an institution. They have acquired a superstructure of theology in order to win the support of the philosophy-trained ruling classes. They have failed altogether in tolerance. Dr. Toynbee, though he inclines to Christianity—

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JOHN MURRAY

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Short Story COMPETITION

As announced in the July issue, ENCOUNTER magazine is offering a prize of £100 for the best short story in the English language by an Asian or African writer. The following have agreed to act as judges:

EDMUND BLUNDEN
(Head of Department of English, Hong Kong University)

JOHN MORRIS
(Controller, B.B.C. Third Programme, and sometime Professor of English Literature, Keio University, Tokyo

STEPHEN SPENDER
(Co-editor of ENCOUNTER)

There is no limitation as to subject, but the following rules are binding on all competitors:

1. No competitor may submit more than one story. It should not have been published before and must not exceed 5,000 words in length.
2. Entries should be addressed to ENCOUNTER (Story Competition), 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1, to arrive not later than January 31st, 1957. Competitors should state their nationality.
3. All entries must be typewritten and accompanied by English stamps or International Reply Coupons, together with a self-addressed envelope for return. Entries cannot be acknowledged.
4. The winning entry will be published in ENCOUNTER, which shall also have first option on any other entries considered suitable for publication at current rates. The judges reserve the right to withhold the prize if, in their opinion, no suitable entry is received.
5. The judges cannot enter into correspondence about entries and their decision is final.

and indeed shows a marked admiration for the Roman Catholic Church—sees the only hope for civilisation in a higher religion tolerant of other higher religions, not perhaps synthetic but always conscious that every religion is an expression of the absolute reality; in the discarding of irrelevant and obsolete institutions, ceremonies, and theological doctrine. Dr. Toynbee sees some faint hope that these lessons may eventually be learned in the greater mutual tolerance between the higher religions today.

IT HAS been necessary to outline the thesis of Dr. Toynbee's book at length because criticism of his views depends so much on the total statement. Before criticising the matter of the book, however, a word must be said on the author's manner of presenting his thesis. In his preface Dr. Toynbee disarms criticism by stating: "I know very well that . . . I have been presenting merely one view among many possible alternatives. . . . If any passages in the present book seem dogmatic, this is an effect of compression in the writing, not of illusions in the writer's mind." It must be said at once that the total effect of the book *is* dogmatic and that this impression tells against the author's argument. The thesis is so succinctly and so closely presented, and objections are so seldom stated in detail, that in the end the reader inevitably feels less sympathetic than he wishes to be. Ultimately, too, this compression gives a feeling of unfairness to his opponents. I am sure that Dr. Toynbee recognises, for example, the many contributions that secular thought has made to civilisation since the 17th century—indeed he quotes many sympathetic passages on tolerance from Bayle and Locke—yet never once is this stated. Again, as I have already suggested, it was unfortunate to select only Gibbon for the analysis of historical animus. If we add to this certain idiosyncrasies—referring to the present time as A.D. 1956 instead of as "now" and constant quotations from the New Testament with referential footnotes—we get a presentation as irritating as it is impressive.

It would be presumptuous for an amateur historian to criticise the historical basis of the thesis; nevertheless as the foregoing analysis shows, it rests primarily upon the history of Christianity. Dr. Toynbee uses the Eastern religions freely as examples and makes brilliantly the charge against denial of the self in his comparison between Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism. Nevertheless, the main thesis rests on Christianity; for example, the idea that higher religion springs from the depressed masses would seem less applicable to Buddhism. Dr. Toynbee may feel that for Western readers the Christian example is the most telling, but a full analysis of the history

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of one of the other six higher religions would have added weight to the argument.

If the picture of the modern world (post-1600 in Dr. Toynbee's terms) seems at times unfair, it also seems partial. The religious sentiment has played its part in exactly Dr. Toynbee's sense in the arts pre-eminently since the end of the 18th century. But the universal nature which he demands for religion gives small place to other expressions of man's spiritual aspirations.

THE most serious criticisms, however, of Dr. Toynbee's thesis can be directed at its feasibility and its desirability. If men are to be won to a world of higher religions living in mutual tolerance, then fanaticism even without violence must be avoided. Dr. Toynbee demands rightly that this tolerance must be based not as secular tolerance has been upon indifference but upon respect. Such a frame of mind would seem to demand that its exponents should have attained sanctity or become mystic contemplatives. For the general run of men such tolerance could only accompany a religion that at most filled part of their lives. They would seek other forms of spiritual expression, yet it is surely exactly here that a Universal State would be most deficient. Something here emerges from Dr. Toynbee's view that the failure of the aims of Hildebrand and of Innocent III spelt the end of the last hope of the old Christian higher religion. European civilisation of the 12th century had many virtues, but it seems doubtful if man could have rested content with the range of expression it allowed to him and it is difficult to believe that Papal Europe could have satisfied his growing demands. The difficulties in the way of Dr. Toynbee's hopes are vast, but he may rightly ask us to accept them in view of our present situation if he can show us that his ends will satisfy. In the last resort, however, it seems possible or even probable that the universal establishment of the higher religions based on mutual tolerance would end in the apathy, frustration, and uniformity that he sees as the fate of Oecumenical States. And this is not perhaps surprising for such is the likely fate not only of Oecumenical States but of Utopias.

It seems disagreeable and churlish so to criticise a thesis put forward with such evident concern for humanity and distress at its peril, and put forward in the preface with such modesty, but Dr. Toynbee's teaching demands criticism if only because it is at once pessimistic, Utopian, and historically determinist. We have seen something of the effect of such teaching in the writings of Spengler and Marx. Unlike their teaching Dr. Toynbee's is, of course, benevolent, tolerant, and modest. Nevertheless it is well, I think, that the Anglo-Saxon world he addresses is so stoutly clothed in empirical armour.

Angus Wilson

DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORSHIP

RARELY a year passes without some petition or memorial or appeal being submitted to some statesman or bishop or eminent body of sorts, under the signatures of literary men calling on the said statesman or bishop or body to do something or other in favour of democratic government and democratic rights somewhere. From such occasions one might naturally conclude that writers are by the nature of their calling well disposed towards the parliamentary form of government. It is the one that is most apt to grant them that freedom of speech without which their calling is vain; the literary predilection for parliamentarism is logical. Yes, that is all true, and that is the orthodox view of literary politics, I believe. The fact remains that when you look into what has been written by authors on the subject of parliamentary elections, and parliamentary procedure, you will find almost nothing but sarcasm, irony, contempt, and abuse. Many masterpieces of poetry have been addressed to tyrants and tyrannical noblemen and their wives and favourites, but precious little worth remembering to the House of Commons or the Chambre des Deputés or the American Congress and Senate. One cannot imagine the genius of Andrew Marvell expressing itself happily in an Horatian Ode on the achievements of the Barebones Parliament. Last time Sir Anthony went to America no one sang "When Westward like the Sun you sailed away. . . ."

It is rather the fashion to think of Disraeli as a considerable novelist (not a fashion I have been able to follow), but if he was truly a great writer of fiction, then he seems to have been an almost unique exception to the rule that professional writers make bad statesmen. The French have found that they make good ambassadors, but that is about as far as they can safely go on the road to power. Lamartine went farther on that road than any other

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Leonard Russell

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CASSELL

writer in modern times, and few people have suffered so great a political flop. Guizot was a great writer and a great statesman, so was Thiers according to some, but neither was a great imaginative writer like Chateaubriand. And Chateaubriand (a good ambassador) was as great a political failure as Lamartine. No, Disraeli was unique in the years between Addison and Sir Winston Churchill (who is not, by the bye, a successful novelist). We are therefore tempted to suppose that the sneers of novelists at the parliamentary system can be explained by the fable of the fox and the grapes. Mr. H. G. Nicholas has had the ingenious idea of collecting thirteen examples of parliamentary elections as described in English fiction. This may help to tell us whether fox-and-grapes is the correct diagnosis.*

One's first impression is how unreadable extracts from novels are. Without the design visible, without any chance for the reader to follow the novelist's skill in building up character and illusions of real experience, novels make dismal reading. I see now why so many critics of fiction have a peevish tone, for this is how most of them must read novels, by means of what Mr. Kingsley Amis, in a moment of disturbing honesty, has called "the reviewer's flip-through, that two-minute process." These peeps into the middle of stories result in curious perversions of judgment. Emily Eden comes out much better than George Eliot, and Mr. R. J. Cruikshank ties with Trollope. A prince of storytellers, H. G. Wells, appears merely as a bore. The novelist who knew elections better than all of them, Dizzy the Exception, is remarkably unmemorable in this extract from *Coningsby*, even though it contains his famous Tadpole and Taper. I wish I liked the *Pickwick Papers* as much as I am told I ought to. If I did I would declare the extract printed here the winner. I find it decidedly "hot-making," but despite this aversion, which I fear I entertain for the whole of that particular book by Dickens (I love the rest), I yet find the extract much easier to get through than the far more interesting material from *Felix Holt*. Why should this be so?

I have read in another review of this book that, according to rumour, the Russians broadcast the Eatanswill election from time to time to warn the Russians against the horrors of democracy. I incline to believe that true. Dickens is well known to Russians who take him very

* *To the Hustings. Election Scenes from English Fiction.* Selected by H. G. Nicholas. Cassell. 18s.

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seriously, not regarding him as a humorist. I was once told by the late Francis Moore, who knew the Russia of Nicholas II very well, that it was the belief of many politically-minded Russians of those days, that Dickens's account of the Eatanswill election in the *Pickwick Papers* had delayed the establishment of parliamentary institutions in the Empire by at least fifty years. A strength of this piece of writing, for propaganda purposes, is that it can be picked out and read by itself as a whole. It is perhaps part of the immense popularity of *Pickwick* that it is one of the few acknowledged masterpieces of the world in which, without losing any essential quality, you can pick and choose what you want. It was written for publication in instalments, and the young Dickens could adapt himself perfectly to his editor's need.

Toiling through this book I sighed for something by Thackeray. If he had introduced an election into one of his books, it would probably stand on its own in the same way, for he also wrote for publication in instalments. Being a devoted Thackerayan I would enjoy all of it including the long hollow sermon at the end of the chapter. "O my children, what will men not do for the sake of letters which may be attached to their names? See yonder Knight of the Most Ancient Orders of Bath and Thistle; where, pri'thee, was his knightly chivalry when, etc., etc., etc."

Trollope wins easily for me, but I had the advantage of having read the whole of *Ralph the Heir*. Belloc's *Mr. Clutterbuck's Election* was the saddest disappointment. That great man never seemed to have the least understanding of political matters, and though his account of an election is probably well rooted in experience, it reads like fantasy of a shallow kind. Let me add that I belong to that small and chosen band which regard Belloc as a superb novelist of the Peacock family. It is curious how well Emily Eden comes out of this unfair test. Possibly she had an advantage in being an unfranchised woman and could look on election antics with a true and heartless detachment. Galsworthy's election scenes in *The Patrician*, not his best book, are profoundly absurd. Mr. R. J. Cruikshank holds the attention in this extract from *The Double Quest* because his book was a *roman à clef*. These snippets are as amusing as the fulldrawn portraits, and the innocent American girl-recorder is a pretty little peg with whom we would get unspeakably bored in a full-length novel. Trollope wins, of course. He gets right down into his election, and though he probably described these scenes in a foxy spirit (remembering Beverly), he convinces us that the grapes were horribly sour in truth. Nevertheless, I think he shows more to advantage on almost any other of his subjects.

THE best advice to aspiring authors of fiction is to leave elections alone. Although our fate depends upon them to a large extent, they are not very interesting in themselves. The great facts of experience, the great emotions of human life, are not present at such occasions. The convictions are largely party-line toeings, the passion is simulated, there is no love, and even the hate is not all real. Humbug by itself and unaccompanied is a thin theme.

Christopher Sykes

AUNTIE

I SAID something last month about blurbs—"which can manage to put one off every book ever written." This needs some qualification. The blurb may put the critic off, but it is obviously designed to put Auntie on. Whether it effectually does, and whether (if so) this is an advantageous exchange, are obviously the publisher's business; and, equally obviously, it is not the critic's business to teach him that. All the same, I wonder what Auntie thinks about it sometimes. Auntie paddles off to the County library with her string-bag and brolly, and emerges with the former heavier by a gay little volume about smiling* by some foreign lady, whose half-title announces:

This is the story of a love which any modern girl might experience and which, in fact, many do. It portrays with deep feeling the dilemma of a young girl who falls out of love with her student friend and into an entanglement with his uncle. The situation between the girl caught in her first great emotional crisis, etc. . . .

Auntie's cup of tea. Nice average young modern girl. Some heart-throbs, some laughter, a few April tears. The pleasant whiff of a little adultery (these French!) in a gleefully Puritan nose. But what does Auntie make of paragraph One?

We had spent the afternoon in a café in the Rue St. Jacques, a spring afternoon like any other. I was slightly bored, and walked up

* *A Certain Smile*. By FRANÇOISE SAGAN. John Murray. 8s. 6d.

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and down between the juke-box and the window, while Bertrand talked about Spire's lecture. I was leaning on the machine, watching the record rising slowly, almost gently, like a proffered cheek, to its slanting position against the sapphire, when, for no apparent reason, I was overcome by a feeling of intense happiness, a sudden realisation that some day I would die, that my hand would no longer touch that chromium rim, nor would the sun shine in my eyes.

I suppose the depressing but honest answer is that Auntie, being Auntie, doesn't notice anything discrepant; and if so, one up to Mr. Murray's ghost!

Mlle. Sagan, as young as they come, has already written one wildly-praised first novel, *Bonjour Tristesse*, and now comes *A Certain Smile*, which is decidedly better. She deserves a very much closer look than Auntie gives her. In the first place, I think it should be emphasised that the admiring comments upon her technical skill are entirely justified. Everything that the style-books recommend, she achieves to perfection. Her style is as lithe and spare as her material; not a wasted word, not an idle incident. And this in no mechanical sense, either. A number of writers, particularly amongst the French, have acquired the "not a word too many" trick; but Mlle. Sagan has the extremely rare gift of combining this with the "not a word too few." She also obeys the golden rule of avoiding the temptation to step an inch outside her own world and experience; hence the startling authority and authenticity of her persons and scenes. Presumably it is her near-perfection in these matters that sets off most of the nibblers and mud-splashers. It is one thing for "Little Mo" to sweep the tennis courts at seventeen; but Petite Françoise carrying off the Wimbledons of the novel world is another, and would seem to reduce the one activity to the level of the other. It is difficult to take quite seriously (*pace* Rimbaud) an art which can be completely mastered in the teens.

Nevertheless, there it is. If the adulations are to be qualified it must be on grounds of scope rather than of texture. It is indeed the very excellence of her techniques that makes Mlle. Sagan's limitations so very plain, defines with such exactness the boundaries across which she so absolutely rightly refuses to be drawn. They are, of course, purely limitations of age and of experience: she has constructed a remarkably integrated and complete world, but there is not very much in it. "Love," yes; personal relations. Beyond that her subject in general is youth; the boredom of the young, the boringness of the young. Any reasonably mature person will have wilted under the glazing eye of the teenager. What on earth can he talk to the child about? Books, flowers, wine, furniture, architecture? Utter incomprehension, utter disinterest, utterly unconcealed. It induces a sort of panic largely springing from the (not really rational) feeling that these things are indeed no more than irrelevant grown-up toys, and the confounded child quite right. Mlle. Sagan exploits this theme to its limits. Her student heroine, Dominique, is in a mental and emotional condition little short of shellshock, whether by the always present reverberations of the hydrogen bomb or merely by the enormous detonation of puberty: she drifts without interest or involvement from situation to situation, seeking neither to connect nor to understand:

There is no end, but addition: the trailing Consequence of further days and hours.

"I stood in the middle of it with dangling arms," she says, "disgusted at my incapacity to react."

Luc, her first lover's uncle, her passion for whom eventually leads to at any rate a temporary lifting of this emotional iron-curtain, is presented as being a person of largely the same type. Hence his attraction.

"I can't be bothered with lies" [he says], *"or at least I have no time for them."*
"What have you time for?"
"Nothing at all. Neither time, nor strength, nor inclination. If I had been capable of anything at all, I would have loved you."

In one sense, therefore, Mlle. Sagan has made her "older man" merely another, this time arrested, adolescent—in so far as it is a mark of youth to discover that there is no demonstrable sense in anything, and a mark of maturity to learn not to care. In another sense, of course, the "incapacity to react" is perhaps the greatest of psychological tragedies, and perhaps also that most peculiarly characteristic of our time.

Mlle. Sagan's future development, then, as a novelist must surely be more than usually bound up with her future as a person; about which it would be as immodest as foolish to speculate.

THE *hero of this powerful story* of the hard-fought German retreat from Russia, is the ordinary soldier. The war was lost; the generals had failed; but doggedly, through mud and snow and carnage, etc. . . .*

Aha! One for Uncle this time; who has just puffed his shag-stuffed briar through the six-

* *The Willing Flesh.* By WILLI HEINRICH. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 16s.

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hundred-and-seventy-ninth page of *The Naked, The Dead, The Damned, and the Derivative.* Somebody likes this sort of thing, I suppose, ten thousand Uncles wolf it as one Uncle, but not on the whole I. But mercifully *The Willing Flesh* is not about the ordinary soldier at all. Hr. Heinrich's hero, Corporal (later Master Sergeant) Steiner, would stand out in any company. He has something in common (oddly enough) with Mlle. Sagan's Dominique in that, like hers, his emotional centres have been blasted out and laid waste, traumatised in fact by a climbing accident in which he has failed to save his fiancée but succeeded in saving himself. His distinguishing features are courage, ingenuity, and what the British Army calls being "Bolshie-minded." The first two enable him to lead his platoon through all the disasters and horrors and anarchy of the collapsing Eastern Front: the third keeps him in perpetual trouble with his superiors, and the book eventually develops into a duel between him and his villainous, cowardly, Prussianised company commander. This is essentially a book about soldiering: Hr. Heinrich's forte is objective narrative and evocative description. Subsidiary characters are only sketched in lightly; and there is surprisingly little about general issues (the Nazi issue, in particular)—the military situation, the author suggests, has reached a stage in which general issues go by the board and all that matters is survival. Exciting and highly readable; and for all its objectivity will stimulate much reflection upon war, human values, and national characteristics.

ALSO RECOMMENDED:

Form and Meaning in Drama. By H. D. F. KITTO. (Methuen. 30s.). Principally an examination of the Orestes trilogy of Æschylus, three plays of Sophocles, and of *Hamlet.* Extremely lively and forceful writing by a scholar whose mind is (for some obscure reason) not dead. Most readers will find the *Hamlet* chapter the most arresting: Mr. Kitto's main thesis is that this is a story about a large number of people, not a study of a single hero:

> *Eight deaths are enough to attract attention, and to make us wonder if the essential thing has been said when the play is called "the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind."*

Robert Benchley: a Biography. By NATHANIEL BENCHLEY. (Cassell. 18s.). An objective and penetrating study by the humorist's son. A sad book full of reported laughter. Benchley's humour seems to have arisen from melancholia more than most: strait-laced and inhibited till his middle years; later destroyed and reduced to literary impotence by his success; and always feeling that something altogether different should have happened to him. Exuding a strange depressed charm all the same, which his son has conveyed intimately and admirably. May be read in connection with *The Benchley Round-up,* a selection by Nathaniel Benchley (also Cassell. 18s.).

Seven Centuries of Popular Song. By REGINALD NETTEL. (Phoenix House. 25s.). I reviewed Mr. Nettel's previous book, *Sing a Song of England,* in ENCOUNTER for February 1955. In this study of popular music "from *Sumer is icumen in* to *Trees,*" the mixture seems to me much as before: very interesting and unusual material, most ably selected, but sometimes a little dubiously commented upon. However a reader can take what he wants (and will not find elsewhere) and leave what he doesn't—Mr. Nettel is a crank, but a valuable crank.

Edward Thomas. By H. COOMBES. (Chatto & Windus. 18s.). Not a biography but a literary study of one of our most neglected writers. Not exciting from sentence to sentence but the total effect is perceptive and impressive. Mr. Coombes shows a sense of absolute balance that is very rare indeed; and combines it with an impeccable manner and enviable lack of anger. Not likely to be soon superseded.

TURNING, as Mr Coombes would wish, from his study to my edition of Thomas' *Last Poems* (which happened to be the first)—and with my mind still running on "the blurb"—I was delighted to find this next to Thomas in his publisher's announcements for Autumn 1918:

> That Goldheim: *A Spy Story. The interest of the reader in this exciting spy story is sustained from first to last. Goldheim is a type of German that one met with at almost every turn before the War: the German who became naturalised in order to pursue his pro-German activities. Abusing our hospitality and confidence, Goldheim employs all his cunning to secure for himself and the country of his birth commercial secrets relating to British trade. The author has drawn the character of this scoundrel and his unsavoury son with skill and humour, and has introduced as a contrasting force his would-be victims, a delightful English family.*

Strange companions. And what better evidence that progress in the improvement and education of public taste is not wholly a myth?

Hilary Corke

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ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

RICHARD WOLLHEIM describes himself as a "linguistic" or "analytical" philosopher—"so the thing be understood, I am indifferent to the name" (Locke). He was born in London in 1923, was educated at Westminster and at Balliol College, Oxford, and since 1949 has been lecturer in Philosophy at University College, London. He has written numerous articles and reviews for periodicals, academic and otherwise (including the November 1955 issue of ENCOUNTER, among the otherwise). He is a subscribing member of the Labour Party, a fact which is of some relevance to his article—though certainly not so relevant as those who have not read the article may be quick to assume. To the best of our knowledge, Mr. Wollheim's essay has few predecessors in its basic approach, which is to elucidate actual political problems by applying the kind of rigorous thinking familiar to students of "analytical" philosophy.

PETER WILES is well known to our readers for his article "Are Trade Unions Necessary?" in last month's issue, and his running debate with Colin Clark on Soviet economics a year ago. He was born in 1919, studied at Winchester and New College, Oxford, in both cases as a scholar. He has been a Fellow of New College since 1948; has contributed several articles to the economic journals; and has just published *Price, Cost and Output* (Basil Blackwell, 30s.), a book whose formidably erudite pages are prefaced by a very uncloisterly quotation from Machiavelli: "He who does not take notice of what is done and only concerns himself with what ought to be done, learns sooner to ruin than to preserve himself." Mr. Wiles recently visited Poland to examine the workings of the planned economy there, and promptly found himself in the midst of a completely unplanned riot in Poznan.

"FOR one, like myself, who has laboriously scattered his time in the writing of novels, literary criticism, and books of travel, the practice of the short story has been the delightful and compensating art and the only kind of writing that has given me great pleasure." So wrote V. S. PRITCHETT in a preface to a recent collection of his stories. EDMUND WILSON's "Messiah at the Seder," however, would appear to be more intimately connected with his preoccupations as a critic; at the very least, it is part of a concern with matters Biblical and Judaic that has resulted in Mr. Wilson's book on the Dead Sea Scrolls, his famous essay on the language of the Bible, etc.

KATHLEEN NOTT is the author of *The Emperor's Clothes*, and of many essays on philosophical and literary subjects. She has also published two novels and two volumes of verse—most recently, *Poems From the North* (Hand and Flower Press), issued last month. . . . JOHN STRACHEY's *Contemporary Capitalism* (Gollancz) was published recently and it will be discussed in next month's ENCOUNTER by Richard Lowenthal. His recent visit to India was at the invitation of the Indian Statistical Institute to go and study the Indian Second Five Year Plan. . . . VICTOR WILLING is a young painter in London. This appreciation of Jackson Pollock is his first published work of art criticism. . . . DAVID WRIGHT, who frequently reviews poetry for us, is joint editor of that very lively literary magazine, *Nimbus*. His new book of poems, *Monologue of a Deaf Man*, is to be published by André Deutsch next year. . . . MARCUS CUNLIFFE is lecturer in American studies at Manchester University, and author of the Penguin book, *The Literature of the United States*. We shall shortly be publishing his essay on George Washington in our "Men and Ideas" series. . . . ANGUS WILSON, CHRISTOPHER SYKES, and HILARY CORKE all review books regularly for ENCOUNTER.

NEXT month's ENCOUNTER will feature ALBERTO MORAVIA's "The Marx-Dostoevsky Duel," a report on his recent visit to Moscow; DWIGHT MACDONALD's "An American looks at the English Press," an analysis of the British press from an American viewpoint, and PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE's essay on "The New Inequality," which may be taken as a reply to C. A. R. Crosland's presentation, in our July–September issues, of the Socialist point of view on equality.

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Photo: Charles Gimpel, London

Jackson Pollock, 1912–1956

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Photo: *Art of this Century, New York*

Jackson Pollock : 'The Guardians of the Secret', 1943

(*Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco*)

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Jackson Pollock : 'Number 1', 1948

(*Museum of Modern Art, New York*)

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Augustus John : ' Vavertemengri '

(*Specially drawn for* ENCOUNTER)

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